

ERIC FONER ON THE NEXT AMERICAN NATION

August 7 - 20, 1995

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

WAR STORIES

Studs Terkel,
Kurt Vonnegut,
Salim Muwakkil,
David Moberg
and Uday Mohan
on World War II
and its fallout

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

\$2.50/CANADA \$3.00



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EDITORIAL

FINISH THE JOB OF ENDING THE COLD WAR

Fifty years ago this week, President Harry Truman made the first overt move in what later came to be known as the Cold War. He dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This act of mass extermination had no real military purpose. American officials claimed the bombing was the only alternative to a full-scale invasion of Japan—and the probable loss of hundreds of thousands of American lives—but, in fact, Japan was already defenseless. The country was subject to routine bombings and cut off from oil imports, and its leaders had already secretly offered to surrender on terms that America would accept after the bomb was dropped. As historical evidence suggests, the bomb was actually aimed at the Soviet Union, which responded by mounting a frenzied effort to build a bomb of its own.

Thus, the Cold War began with an act of unimaginable and unnecessary violence, matched in its ferocity, at least on the American side, only by the equally unnecessary war against Vietnam—in which some 58,000 Americans and more than a million Vietnamese were killed.

Now, 50 years after Hiroshima and 20 years after the last American troops left Saigon, the Soviet Union no longer exists, the United States enjoys full diplomatic and trade relations with Communist China, and President Clinton has taken the final step in putting the Vietnam War to rest by agreeing to an exchange of ambassadors. That leaves but one major relic of the Cold War: blind U.S. hostility toward Cuba.

The irony here is that American actions gave Cuba no choice but to become a part of the Soviet bloc. At first, Fidel Castro and the other leaders of the Cuban revolution sought to pursue an independent path between the two great superpowers. Distrusted by Cuban Communists, who had opposed Castro and his revolutionary band until it became clear that they were winning, Castro initially sought aid for his new regime from the United States. But when Castro made clear that he intended to carry out a far-reach-

ing social revolution, and that he wanted to free Cuba of its economic dependence on the United States, the Eisenhower administration retaliated. When Cuba agreed to sell the Soviet Union sugar at a low price in exchange for a \$100 million credit, Eisenhower placed an embargo on Cuban sugar. And when Castro nationalized sugar plantations, as well as the electric and telephone companies, the United States cut off all of Cuba's oil supplies.

This was the decisive act that forced Cuba into near-total dependence on the Soviets, thereby strengthening the pro-Communist forces in Cuba and Fidel's own dictatorial proclivities. And, of course, it led to the isolation and demoralization of the more democratic participants in the Cuban revolution—and to the fulfillment of American Cold War

prophecy. After that, for almost 30 years, Castro was among the most loyal of the Soviet Union's dependents. And because it was only 90 miles from Florida, Cuba became a particular thorn in the side of our Cold Warriors.

But important as this history is to an understanding of the special hostility that a small group of Cuban exiles and Cold War diehards still harbors, it is now just history. That, at any rate, is what the leaders of all but three Latin American countries now believe, as they increase their trade and investment in Cuba. And that's what more and more Americans think.

*Now that Clinton
has recognized
Vietnam, it's
time to close
the book on
the Cold War
by accepting
the inevitable
and normalizing
relations
with Cuba.*

In short, it's time to act toward Cuba as we have toward China and Vietnam. It is obvious that the more we restrict trade and travel with Cuba, the more Castro will feel the need for stringent restrictions on dissent. At this point hostility and threats can only elicit responses in kind. Castro is clearly willing to open Cuba to normal relations and trade. And if our government really does desire a Cuban transition to a more mixed economy and greater democracy, it should take Castro at his word.

As we've stated before, doing so may strengthen Castro or weaken him. But either way, it can only help the Cuban people to move toward a more secure and comfortable life, and help Cuba to attain a representative democracy. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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 (ISSN 0160-5992)

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This issue (Vol. 19, No. 19) published August 7, 1995 for newsstand sales August 7-20, 1995.

InTHESE TIMES

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LETTERS

The mansion error

I have several problems with Peter Dreier and John Atlas' "Mansions on the hill" (ITT, June 26). I take issue with his blanket statement that "the wealthy would continue to buy homes with or without a tax subsidy." Here in the Bay Area, even high-income working families find it difficult to purchase a decent and livable home without the benefit of the home mortgage interest deduction.

It is misrepresenting reality to claim that all families with incomes over \$100,000 are wealthy people living in mansions. In California, the average home price is around \$250,000. A typical family would need \$50,000 (20 percent of the house's value) as down payment—money typically scraped together through borrowing from banks or family or from cashing in savings accounts or stocks. In many cases, these "wealthy" families have most of their financial assets locked into their home and live from pay-

check to paycheck, saddled with many financial burdens beyond the monthly mortgage payment.

Dreier and Atlas use a misguided "divide and conquer" strategy—attempting to bolster home ownership for low- and middle-income working people by placing at risk those other working people who have been able to achieve the goal of home ownership.

I suggest that if we are going to discuss the material differences within various income groups, we had better develop a more distinct definition of those affluent people in our society who live in "mansions." It would seem all working people could get behind a progressive homeowner tax by going after the money thrown at corporate welfare and the bloated military budget.

M. Passen
Pacifica, Calif.

Dreier and Atlas reply: We certainly agree with letter-writer Passen that a great many social and economic needs could be funded by dramatically

reducing subsidies to big business and the Pentagon. But there is no reason for the federal government to continue subsidizing wealthy Americans so they can purchase huge homes, while most hardworking young families can't afford to buy even a small bungalow.

As we noted in the article: "The homeowner tax credit would distribute refunds progressively, giving a larger tax break to homeowners with modest incomes and gradually reducing benefits as family income increases. The credit could also be adjusted to reflect regional housing costs, so homeowners in high-priced neighborhoods would not be penalized." It appears that Passen read the first sentence but overlooked the second one.

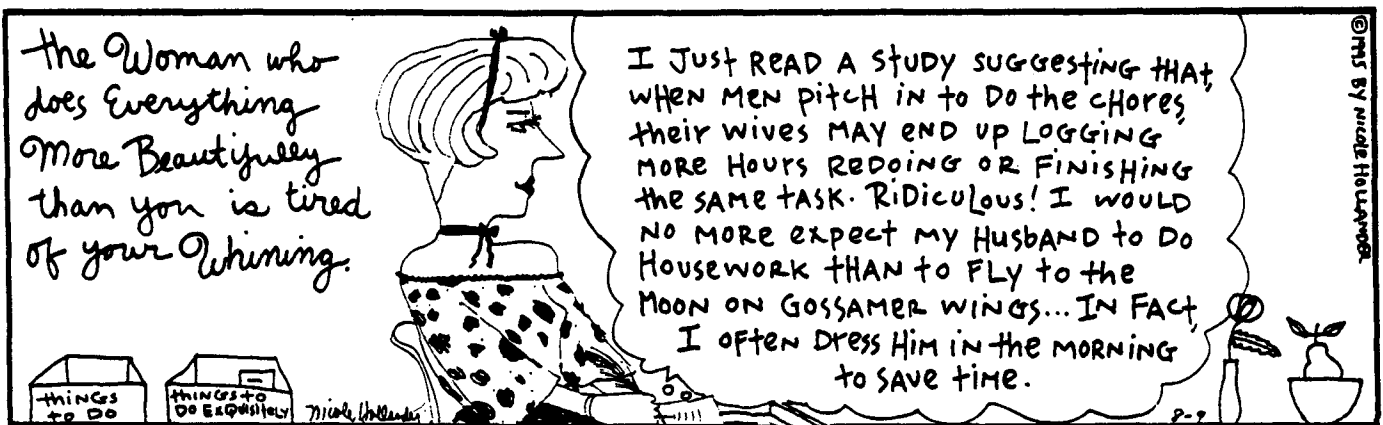
The mortgage interest deduction now costs the government \$51 billion a year, which disproportionately benefits the rich—who can afford to buy homes without any subsidy. We can spend that money more wisely and cost-effectively. The goal of our proposal to change the existing, regressive mortgage interest deduction to a progressive tax credit is to expand homeownership, especially for those working-class and middle-class households who now derive little or no tax subsidies from the current system. To do this, we obviously have to take into account variations in housing prices.

California scheming

Jeff Elliott correctly skewers the Republican-appointed director of Cal-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



ifornia's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for abusing his authority to oversee local government compliance with the state's housing element law (ITT, June 26). But ITT readers should not conclude that state-mandated local planning for low-income housing itself constitutes bad policy. Literally thousands of units of low-income housing have been developed in California as a direct result of the housing element law.

A more typical example of the workings of the housing element law and HCD can be found in Sebastopol's neighbor, Healdsburg. After failing HCD's review and facing litigation by low-income families and farmworkers (represented by California Rural Legal Assistance and my office), the city adopted a housing element that included affordable-housing zoning, making it possible for the local nonprofit development corporation to build at least two new affordable housing complexes.

The existing law—adopted during Gov. Jerry Brown's administration (long before Jack Kemp discovered the "affordable housing card") and for years administered fairly by a competent staff of dedicated professionals—requires all local governments to make adequate provision for the housing needs of low- and very low-income households. It confronts the missing link in the nonprofit housing development equation—adequate planning. Even with land and HUD dollars, a nonprofit developer can't build affordable housing for the lowest-income households unless local government provides appropriate zoning and adequate infrastructure. The state mandate furnishes the support desperately needed by progressive local planners faced with selfish, parochial pressure to exclude low-income housing in the name of local control.

Michael Rawson
Directing Attorney,
California Affordable Housing
Law Project
Oakland, Calif.

Abu-Jamal

"Political Prisoner" by Salim Muwakkil (ITT, July 10) was excellent and on-target. The only thing that will save Mumia Abu-Jamal is public indignation over this gross miscarriage of justice.

Unfortunately, Muwakkil's article failed in one respect—it didn't tell people who to write to or give any addresses. Interested persons should write to Judge Legrome Davis, City Hall, Room 506, Philadelphia, PA 19107. His telephone number is (215) 686-9534. Ask him to use his influence to have Judge Albert Sabo recuse himself from the appeal process and grant Abu-Jamal a new trial.

Gov. Thomas Ridge can be reached at the Main Capitol building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120. His telephone number is (717) 783-1116. His fax number is (717) 772-8462.

Charles Micheletti
Tremont, Ill.

Wellstone lessons

Adam Platt's brief dismissal of *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington* (ITT, July 10) did a great disservice to that book—and to your readers. While Wellstone's victory has not proven to be a harbinger of a progressive renaissance, it still holds some valuable lessons for those who choose to seriously analyze it.

Despite Platt's complaints about the book's "tunnel vision," it does address a number of broad themes. It explains, in some detail, how Wellstone's superior field organization defeated a series of primary opponents and a lavishly funded two-term GOP incumbent. By doing so, it shows that, on occasion, people power *can* defeat money power.

Wellstone's entire approach to politics offers even more valuable lessons. As the book makes clear, Wellstone was amazed (and sometimes appalled) by the fixation on fundraising and on polling that is the hallmark of contem-

porary politics. Perhaps our political system would not have reached its current sorry state if we had a few more politicians who shared Wellstone's broader perspectives.

It seems that most left-leaning writers have become so accustomed to defeat that they fail to appreciate the occasional victory. The fact that Wellstone's victory has proven to be largely aberrational does *not* mean that it offers no lessons. It is unfortunate, therefore, that you devoted so little attention to this important book, and it is even more unfortunate that the attention you did devote offered such a narrow perspective.

Patrick Toomey Jr.
Miami Shores, Fla.

Messages

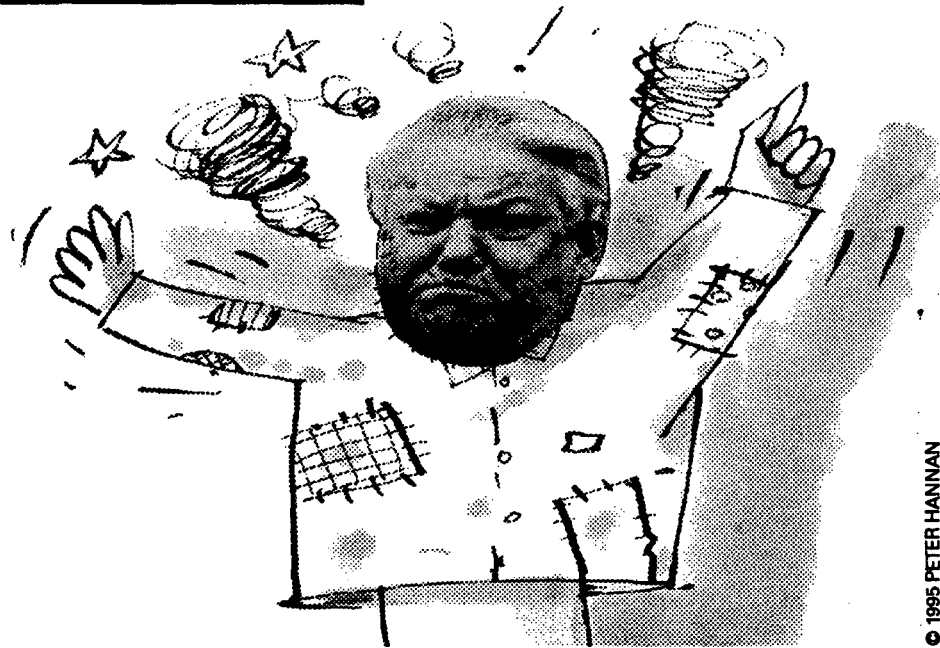
Once again, you have been derelict in doing your homework. Ilan Stavans' review of Titón's *Strawberry and Chocolate* (ITT, May 15) is a case in point. It is a real disappointment to see Stavans eschew the politics behind the film.

Cubanophiles are well aware of the role the U.S. embargo plays in cultural and artistic matters. Since it is illegal for any flow of American currency to Cuba, many Cuban artists and performers have tried to beat the system by arranging for outside citizenship to receive such funds. Thus, Titón chose Spain. Even then, there are reports that Miramax tried to withhold portions of the revenue, knowing full well that Titón's devotion to the Cuban revolution would result in some funneling to Havana.

Strawberry and Chocolate's message, as with many works coming out of the island, is that the troubles, distresses and unrest among the people are not political but a direct result of the illegal and nefarious economic restrictions of the blockade. To discuss such works without the geopolitics is shameful, indeed.

Don Sloan
New York

InSHORT



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PUPPET REGIME

Managers of Russia's only independent TV station are warning that fragile post-Soviet press freedoms may be in peril after government prosecutors charged a popular political satire program with defaming Kremlin leaders and threatened to shut it down. "This situation would be very sad if it were not so terribly funny," says Igor Malashenko, president of NTV, the only one of Russia's three television networks not owned and operated by the state.

Public prosecutor Alexei Ilyushenko stunned the nation by launching legal action against NTV's weekly political puppet show *Kukli*, following a mid-July episode that depicted President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as homeless beggars trying to live on Russia's minimum wage. Ilyushenko filed the charge under Article 131 of Russia's criminal code, which is designed to protect the image of top state leaders from public ridicule. A maximum penalty of two years "corrective labor" is stipulated for those found guilty under the law. The prosecutor did not name a particular defendant, leaving the entire NTV staff fearful the investigation might be a pretext to bring the station under state control.

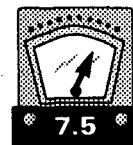
NTV was created five years ago by several dozen talented defectors from



Pagan place

Apparently forgetting for a moment that we do not live

in a theocracy, an Arizona prosecutor recently decided to embellish her case against a



Buddhist man accused of killing his girlfriend's young son with an editorial aside or two on the "pagan" nature of Buddhism. Deputy County Attorney Anne-Michael Bowen of Maricopa County claimed in court documents that the accused man, Robert Gallego Jr., needed to be sent to prison so that he could discover Jesus Christ and save himself from a "path of eternal damnation," the *Arizona Republic* reports. "Christianity," Bowen argued, "is the only true path to an everlasting life." Local authorities have reprimanded Bowen for her actions, for which she presumably expects to be rewarded in the afterlife.

Like, business ethics!

Supermodel Christy Turlington's new career as a restaurateur seems to have

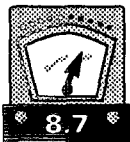


occasioned a certain degree of philosophical reflection on her part about

the ethics of business and the advertising world, a recent article in the *New York Times* suggests. Turlington, who along with three other super-models owns New York's semi-trendy Fashion Cafe, appeared a little defensive when asked about her reasons for going into the business. "OK, I admit it, a tacky theme restaurant for tourists is not the type of job I'm typically associated with," she remarked. "But then I said to myself, 'Wait a minute. How is it possible for a model to sell out?' It's just another job."

Tomato madness

Fresh on the heels of his triumphant chain-gang revival, Alabama Gov. Fob James has taken another step to show state prisoners who's boss: He's uprooted the tomato plants grown by HIV-



positive women prisoners at the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women. James

was convinced that the tomatoes—grown by the 10 residents in the HIV-positive unit as a form of therapy—would have been traded for cigarettes and other prison contraband, the *Mobile Register* reports. "Today it's tomatoes and tomorrow it's marijuana and God knows what else," explained the governor.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Models Inc.—redible
2. Infomercial irritating
3. Plausibly deniable
4. L.A.P.D. blue
5. Bob Dole-icious
6. Raoul Cédras-tic
7. Otto North nasty
8. Moleday in Rwanda
9. Zhirinovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

Soviet state TV, and is owned in part by its workers and in part by a leading Russian banking house. "This is clearly an attempt to intimidate the independent media," says NTV's Malashenko of the prosecution. "Someone badly underestimates our will to survive." Malashenko links the attack on NTV to its coverage of the Chechnya war, which was far more open and graphic than that of its state-owned counterparts. "This could be a kind of revenge," he says.

Freedom of the press is a touchy issue in Russia, where there is little tradition of open criticism, state functions remain largely inaccessible to journalists and the government occasionally meddles openly with the media. Yevgeny Kiselyov, NTV's vice president, fears that the legal action could be part of a larger pattern of government interference with the media in advance of parliamentary elections in December and presidential elections slated for next June. "Russia has entered a period of heightened political tension," he says. "Those in power, who, of course, do not wish to be out of power after the elections, are trying to establish firmer control over the media, over television most of all."

NTV's *Kukli* is a weekly political satire that features puppets of Russian leaders acting out humorous dramatizations of current events. The episode cited by the prosecutor depicted President Yeltsin begging for change in a commuter train, carrying his "baby"—presidential security chief Alexander Korzhakov—on his back. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was shown wearing a worn-out jersey and an ancient fur hat, earning a living by selling parts of an old, broken gas stove. Puppets representing Russia's defense and interior ministers were seen fighting over an umbrella they found under a pile of garbage.

Kukli has skewered Kremlin leaders since its inception last autumn. Why the government chose this particular episode to attack has been a matter of excited debate among Russians. "The falling living standards of Russians is today's most sensitive issue, and it's no surprise that this theme set them off," says Moscow University economist Alexander Buzgalin. "The statistics on falling wages, poverty and unemployment in Russia are far worse than last year. Walk through any Moscow train station and you'll witness plenty of scenes just like those depicted in that puppet show—only real."

—Fred Weir

THE CAMPUS CHILL

A recent Supreme Court decision, *Rosenberger vs. University of Virginia*—which allows public universities to fund on-campus religious publications—has liberals fearing that the wall between church and state is crumbling. But a much more ominous decision from the California Supreme Court—which denies student funding to groups considered political—has been virtually overlooked.

The U.S. Supreme Court has always applied a more relaxed standard to funding religion at colleges and universities than in public schools, but it has never considered the question of funding political organizations. But the California Supreme Court has: In *Smith vs. Regents of the University of California* (1993), the court ruled in favor of right-wing legal groups that attacked the use of student-fee money to fund "leftist" groups. As a result, several student groups at Berkeley were summoned to investigative hearings this April to determine if they were "political."

Eventually, several student groups (mostly left-oriented) were denied recognition for being primarily "political, ideological or religious in nature" and lost their funding, mailboxes and offices. These organizations included pro-choice and pro-life groups, a campus humor newspaper called *Heuristic*

Squelch and the multiracial student newspaper *diatribe*. The student government examined articles and the listings in *diatribe*'s calendar of events and decided that they were excessively political. And the constraints dictated by the *Smith* decision appear not to be applied universally: A conservative newspaper called *Counterpoint* continues to be funded.

The *Rosenberger* and *Smith* decisions bring up a curious paradox: If students publish a newspaper about liberation theology or the Christian Coalition, will they be banned as a "political" group or funded as a religious group? Such hermeneutic questions are dwarfed, however, by the growing war on political speech in American colleges and universities. This month, a House subcommittee narrowly rejected an amendment by Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) that would have cut off all federal funds to any college allowing student fees to be used "for the support of any organization or group that is engaged in lobbying or seeking to influence public policy or political campaigns." In other words, a university could lose millions if it permitted any student group to express an opinion on a political issue.

Conservatives know quite well that they have a financial edge in the culture wars, with right-wing foundations directly subsidizing student groups, conservative campus newspapers and think tanks devoted to political spin control. As with the attacks on the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, the assault on campus political speech aims to destroy all government funding of culture and education, so that the right wing's own privately financed views will prevail in the public sphere.

—John K. Wilson

MINE ENEMY

Land mines kill or maim some 30,000 people around the world each year. It should come as no surprise that mines constitute one of the deadliest threats to civilians in war-ravaged countries: Millions of land mines are manufactured annually. With that in mind, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) led a successful congressional campaign in 1992 to ban their export from the United States. Since Leahy's moratorium became law, nearly 20 other countries have followed suit. Now Leahy is proposing a one-year moratorium on the use of all land mines, and, on an encouraging note, President Clinton called for their eventual elimination in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly last September.

Unfortunately, any U.S. land-mine moratorium may be rolled back if the Pentagon gets its way. The Defense Department is pushing the administration to ban only long-life (non-self-destructing) anti-personnel mines, allowing the continued use—and sale—of self-destructing mines. Self-destructing mines, the reasoning goes, are "safer" than the long-life variety because, theoretically, they do not present a danger after a conflict has ended.

Arguing that an immediate, comprehensive ban "is not a practical goal, [because] there are too many legitimate uses," a spokesperson for the State Department's Office of Political and Military Affairs explained that the administration favors a partial ban—regulated by an international agreement—that would lead toward the eventual elimination of all anti-personnel mines.

Steve Goose, with the Washington, D.C.-based Arms Project of Human Rights Watch, disagrees. "We're not too hot on this," he says. "We think that the proposed regime will undermine progress [toward a total land-mine

MEDIA WATCH

By Jennifer Gonnerman



Newsday's end

When *New York Newsday* folded last month, a bold attempt to transform urban journalism died with it. Launched 10 years ago by the Times-Mirror Corp.—which also publishes the *Los Angeles Times*—*New York Newsday* wasn't just another tabloid. It covered the five boroughs in a way no other daily paper had, targeting an often-ignored readership of recent immigrants and middle-class minorities.

Racial issues, health crises, neighborhood concerns, political corruption—*Newsday* reported more aggressively on these issues than any other New York City newspaper. *Newsday* also hired more women and minorities than any other New York paper, and it was the first mainstream daily to employ an openly gay columnist.

The only problem was that *New York Newsday* kept losing money. The tabloid reportedly lost \$100 million over the last decade. On July 13, Times-Mirror's newly installed top executive, Mark Willes, made his first trip to the *Newsday* newsroom. He pulled the plug the next day.

Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Jim Dwyer headed a last-minute rescue effort,

attempting to convince Times-Mirror to sell *Newsday* to its employees. But Times-Mirror had no interest. According to *Newsday* columnist Gail Collins, Willes "had no desire to talk to anyone about saving the paper." Meanwhile, *New York Newsday's* profitable sister publication—*Long Island Newsday*—will continue publishing.

Even with *New York Newsday* gone, the Big Apple still has more daily newspapers than any other American city. But it was *Newsday* that kept reporters at other papers on their toes. After years of neglecting local politics, the *New York Times* beefed up its metro section to compete with *Newsday's* coverage.

The demise of *Newsday* means that the influence of the city's other two tabloids—the *Post* and the *Daily News*—will be even stronger. Under the ownership of conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch, the *Post's* op-ed pages feature a steady dose of right-wing rhetoric. Meanwhile, critics charge that the *Daily News's* favorable coverage of GOP Mayor Rudy Giuliani may have something to do with the fact that the mayor recently let *Daily News* owner and real estate developer Mort Zuckerman keep the \$17 million he owed the city for reneging on a development deal.

The success of *New York Newsday*—with its hard-hitting investigations and multicultural perspectives—could have reinvigorated New York newspapers' commitment to quality city coverage. But now that *Newsday* is gone, the quality of all the city's papers is likely to decline.

ban]. It's being presented by the U.S. as an interim step, but we feel that it's the end goal."

Not surprisingly, an international convention banning the use of all but self-destructing mines would be a boon to American arms manufacturers. The United States is one of only a handful of countries that produces the expensive self-destructing mines. On the other hand, such a selective ban is unlikely to be respected. "There is little incentive for poor countries to spend more to buy a mine that self-destructs after a period of months when there are tens of millions of long-life mines in their arsenals already," says a Leahy aide. U.S. Defense Department estimates put a price tag of \$100 on self-destructing mines, as opposed to \$3 for ordinary mines.

The administration's proposal also assumes that self-destruct mechanisms actually work, although they have yet to be proven in the field. (See *ITT*, Sept 6, 1993). "There are very, very few self-destruct mines around," according to Patrick Blagden, a retired British brigadier general and U.N. de-mining expert. "I am told the next generation of self-destruct mines will be immensely reliable, but I'll believe it when I see the field tests."

There is one point nobody is debating: Short-life mines do the same damage to a human body as long-term ones. And as Leahy pointed out in a Senate address in June, while every weapon may have some military utility, some, such as chemical weapons, have been deemed inhumane and a violation of the laws of war. With a review of the Convention on Certain Inhuman Conventional Weapons scheduled for this fall, it is important for policy-makers to remember that land mines of all types fit squarely into this category.

—Cory Juris

The Adventures of a Huge Mouth

By Peter Hannan



PILL PARIAH

Barbara Seaman, the "first prophet of the women's health movement."

When Barbara Seaman appeared on the David Frost show in 1969 to discuss the medical hazards of the Pill, she was supposed to debate Dr. Alan Guttmacher, president of Planned Parenthood. At the time, physicians and feminists alike insisted that the Pill was the perfect contraceptive. But Seaman contradicted that claim, noting that thousands of women around the world were dying from the complications it caused. During the show, Seaman recalls, "Guttmacher became so agitated that he walked off the set. He said, 'I'll be damned if I'll listen to this crap.'"

The woman whom Gloria Steinem has called "the first prophet of the women's health movement" has paid a steep price for challenging the medical status quo. A columnist who covered women's health issues for the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Bride's* in the '60s, Seaman was fired from both magazines after advertisers objected to her 1969 book, *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill*, which argued that women taking the Pill were making an uninformed and potentially lethal choice. The book was ridiculed in the press, and some feminists even accused Seaman of being in league with the pope.

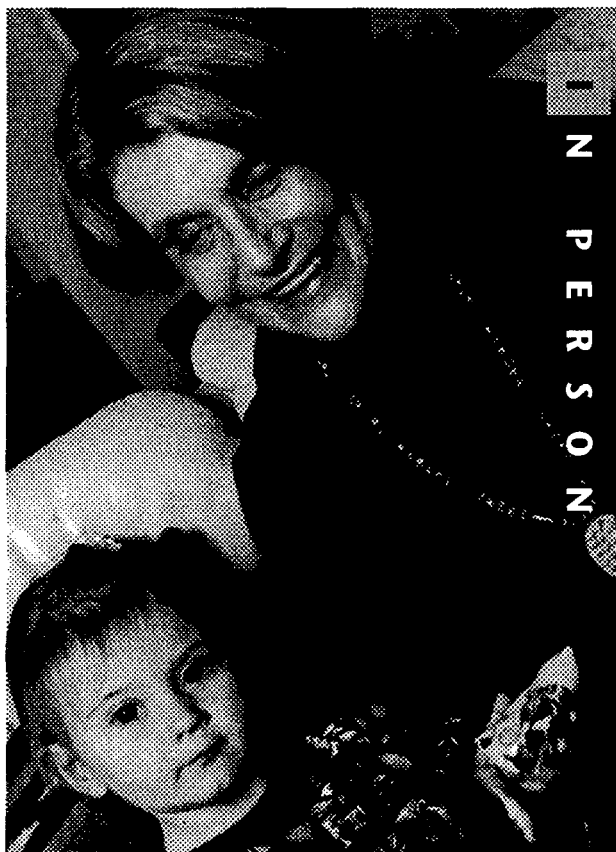
Although pharmaceutical companies, the medical establishment and timid magazine publishers have tried to silence her, Seaman continues to expose the Pill's dangers. In June, Hunter House published a 25th anniversary edition of *The Doctors' Case*, which warns that even the reduced hormone levels in today's Pill are not safe for all women. With the rapid spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, Seaman argues that it makes little sense to use the Pill. "You're much better off using a condom," she advises women.

It may sound like sensible advice, but Seaman continues to be mocked and blacklisted by the medical and pharmaceutical establishments. The June issue of the "Women's Health Advocate Newsletter," a publication with a pro-Pill line, calls her warnings "unscientific." And despite her prestigious journalism career, the only high-profile women's magazine Seaman can get published in today is *Ms.*, which accepts no advertising.

Seaman didn't start out as a radical in the '60s. A prominent writer, she had a psychiatrist husband, kids in private school, a fashionable New York City

When Barbara Seaman appeared on the David Frost show in 1969 to discuss the medical hazards of the Pill, she was supposed to debate Dr. Alan Guttmacher, president of Planned Parenthood. At the time, physicians

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ETC.

By Beth Johnson
and Joel Bleifuss

Standing small

On June 7, Bill Clinton employed the first veto of his presidency to strike down a rescissions bill that would have slashed \$16 billion from this year's federal budget—with many cuts coming from social programs. And those weren't the only unkind cuts included in the bill. Hidden in the bill was a rider that would have allowed logging companies to vastly increase timber cuts on public lands. After Clinton promised to veto the measure, the nation's mainstream environmental groups took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, saying, "Thank you, President Clinton, for standing tall!"

But it appears now that the groups proved premature in their praise for the president's posture. In mid-July, Republican leaders—after consulting with the White House—reintroduced a compromise rescissions bill, one that still contained the logging rider. On July 21 Congress passed the measure, and shortly thereafter Clinton signed it.

As Patrick Mazza noted in the May 29 *In These Times*, the rider prohibits public debate of a U.S. Forest Service plan permitting "salvage logging" on federal lands. That plan could expand this year's scheduled timber sales by more than 40 percent. The Forest Service has claimed that salvage logging is necessary to cull sick trees from the nation's forests. But environmentalists question the necessity of the plan.



Suspecting an ulterior motive, environmentalists note the Forest Service derives much of its income from timber sales— income that stands to be

substantially increased by salvage logging.

"This bill is one of the most egregious assaults on our environment in history," said Tim Hermach of the Native Forest Council, a Eugene, Ore.-based environmental group. "We have just seen yet another demonstration of our dysfunctional democracy and the extreme corruption of corporate congressional politics and power at the expense of the people."

Welfare dependency

Just a few short months ago—when groups ranging from the liberal Public Citizen to the conservative Cato Institute were calling on Congress to cut hundreds of billions of dollars in federal subsidies for American business—it seemed that a bipartisan consensus was building to cut corporate welfare.

But somehow, the spending blueprints passed by the Republican-controlled Congress in late June failed to reflect that consensus. Public Citizen's line-by-line analysis of the GOP's seven-year plan to balance the budget—which calls for \$1 trillion in spending cuts over the next seven years—reveals that less than 2 percent of the cuts target corporate welfare subsidies.

address and a housekeeper. But she became obsessed by letters from readers who complained about side effects they had experienced with the Pill. "The most disturbing thing about my reader mail," she remembers, "was that the doctors denied and tried to invalidate the women's experiences." After poring through medical journals, Seaman analyzed the growing evidence about the Pill's risks and women's ignorance about them. "I had found a vocation, if not a dependable income," she deadpans.

By the late '60s, American physicians already knew that studies in England estimated as much as a tenfold increase in mortality due to clotting in the blood vessels of women taking the Pill. In fact, leaflets underscoring the risks were provided to physicians along with the pills, but the doctors were not legally compelled to pass on the information to their patients, and few did. A 1970 Newsweek-Gallup poll revealed that two-thirds of the women taking the Pill had never been warned by their physicians of any hazards.

In January 1970, several months after the publication of *The Doctor's Case*, the book caught the eye of Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-WI), who decided to convene hearings to investigate the Pill's dangers. Congressional organizers used *The Doctors' Case* as a guidebook: Nearly every single person who was called to testify in the first five days of the hearings had been quoted by Seaman. During the testimony—presented entirely by male experts—women's health activists, led by Alice Wolfson, invaded the Senate. They interrupted the hearings, called out Seaman's name, and shouted, "Why aren't women testifying?" After the demonstrators were removed from the chamber Seaman followed them, introduced herself, and invited them to lunch. "That was the true moment when the women's health movement was born," Seaman says.

The demonstrations had an enormous impact. Women around the country began to re-evaluate—and reject—their gynecologists' advice. *Newsweek* reported during the hearings that 18 percent of American women taking the Pill had quit and 23 percent were thinking seriously of quitting because of what they learned from news coverage of the hearings. Because of Seaman's efforts, the Food and Drug Administration ordered manufacturers of the Pill to insert warnings in each packet, despite vehement opposition from the American Medical Association and the manufacturers themselves. Soon, many high-risk women—older women who smoked, for example—stopped using the Pill, and morbidity rates dropped off quite rapidly.

But Seaman has not limited her work to the politics of contraception. During the '70s, Seaman served on the task force that successfully pushed to have DES, a cancer-causing hormone given to pregnant women and used to fatten livestock, removed from cattle and poultry. And over the past several years, Seaman has been instrumental in getting social workers trained to deal with and identify domestic violence placed in emergency rooms in New York City hospitals.

All the while, Seaman continues to raise awareness of the problems with the Pill for a new generation of users. "In the early years of the women's movement," says Seaman, "women began to listen to their own bodies. What bothers me today is that I sense that women are not trusting their own experiences. When I talk at colleges, the women I meet have a resigned attitude. They say, 'Well, we have to put up with all these side effects.' " —Leora Tanenbaum

Barbara Seaman is pictured with her granddaughter, Sophia Bamert, "sergeant at arms" of Grandmothers for Full Disclosure, a newly formed group seeking greater public access to information about food additives, prescription drugs and atomic hazards. To contact the group, write to 110 West End Ave., Apt. 5D, New York, NY 10023.

WAR STORIES

Remembering the good war

You called your book "*The Good War*." That title is based on the widely held notion that World War II was worth fighting for because the enemy was so patently evil. Are there good wars left?

Remember, I put "*The Good War*" in quotes. In a little note at the beginning of the book, I explained that the title was in quotation marks because the adjective and the noun don't match. It was a war that some could justify on the basis of fighting fascism. But no war is good.

Look at the stories in the book. This ex-Marine, a gentle guy named

Sledge—for Sledgehammer—told how the kid who lived next door to him carried the teeth and ears of dead Japanese soldiers. The kid had become a savage. Especially in the Pacific Theater, where race entered the picture, there was terrible savagery. Sledge explained how this kid had been fighting when the head of a Japanese soldier was shattered by a shell. It was raining, and rain fell into the skull, and the kid pitched pebbles into the skull just to hear the click it made. War makes savages of us all, that's the point. No war is good, no matter what. No matter what. The conscientious objectors are right.

Where were you on August 6, 1945, the day of Hiroshima?

I was in Chicago, and I am ashamed to say, instead of being with the few Quakers and others who decried the thing—the horrendous thing—I was among the great many who had said, "Oh, boy, I'm glad it's over." I remember that well. And I say that with no little shame.

Today, we know that the myth America lives by—that the decision to use the atomic bomb saved millions of American lives by preventing an invasion—we know that's just crap. The Japanese were already on the verge of surrendering. [In his forthcoming book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*] Gar Alperovitz provides overwhelming evidence that the bombing was gratuitous.

Why did we drop it? So little Harry could show Molotov and Stalin we've got the cards. That was the phrase Truman used. We showed the goddamned Russians we've got something and they'd better behave themselves in Europe. That's why it was dropped. The evidence is overwhelming. And yet you tell that to 99 percent of Americans and they'll spit in your eye.

What do you make of the controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian?

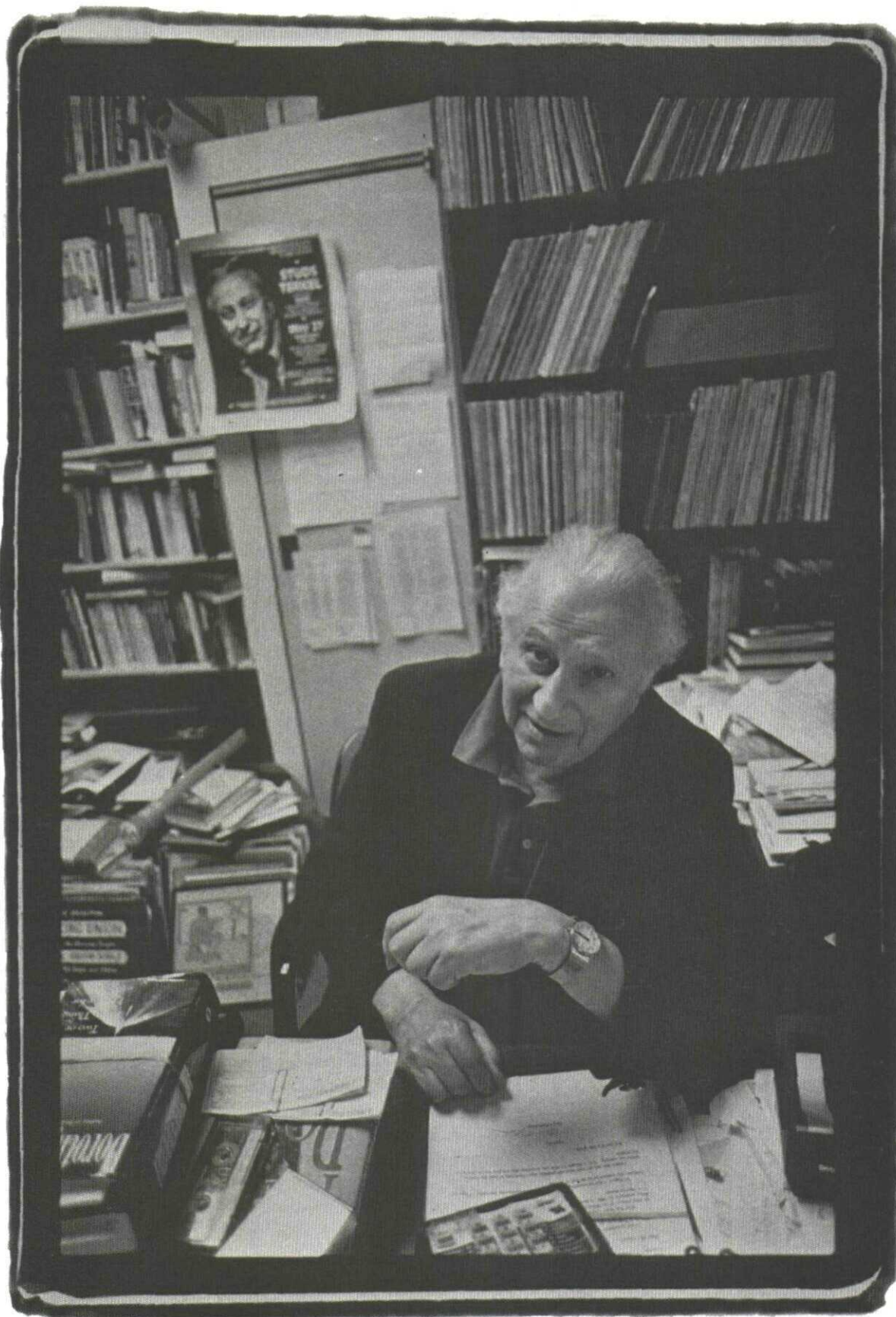
It was disgraceful. What they originally had in mind was

Continued on page 15

**Studs Terkel
interviewed by
Miles Harvey**

On the afternoon In These Times caught up with Studs Terkel, he was in the midst of an inventory. It was no small undertaking. WFMT, the radio station Terkel has been affiliated with for 50 years, is moving to a new building, and Terkel faces the monumental task of cataloguing decades of taped interviews before the trucks arrive. In a storage area, row upon row of shelves are filled with thousands of reel-to-reel tapes. With even a cursory glance at this immense and eclectic collection, you get a feel for the incredible scope of Terkel's career. There's a Tom Wolfe interview here, a Derek Walcott there, a Louis Malle on one shelf, a Blind John Davis on the next. A Ravi Shankar lays haphazardly across the top of a row of James Baldwins. You wonder if any prominent thinker, writer, artist or musician has escaped an encounter with Terkel's tape recorder.

But the 83-year-old author's conversations with the famous are the least part of his legacy. In oral histories such as *Division Street: America*, *Hard Times*, *American Dreams: Lost and Found*, *Race and the soon-to-be-published Coming of Age: The Story of Our Century by Those Who've Lived It* (New Press), Terkel has told the tale of 20th-century America through a huge chorus of average American voices. In fact, it's unlikely that anyone has ever talked to more people about the fate of the United States than Studs Terkel. To mark the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima, In These Times asked Terkel to reflect on the legacy of World War II, a subject he probed brilliantly in his Pulitzer Prize-winning 1985 book, "*The Good War*."





Unholy war

By Kurt Vonnegut

The following remarks were prepared for the 50th Anniversary commemoration of the Hiroshima bombing at the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel.

There is no need for me or for anyone to say, "Let us pray." In this place and on this occasion, we cannot help but pray and pray. We will still be praying as we depart.

We were raised that way, or we would not be here today.

The most intelligent and decent prayers ever uttered by a famous American, addressed to whom it may concern, and following an enormous man-made calamity, were those of Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. And Indiana. And Kentucky.

Abraham Lincoln prayed most memorably at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, when battlefields were small. Battlefields could be seen in their entirety by men on horseback atop a hill. Cause and effect were simple. Cause was gunpowder, a mixture of potassium nitrate, charcoal and sulfur. Effect was flying metal. Or a bayonet. Or a rifle butt.

Abraham Lincoln said this about the silenced killing grounds at Gettysburg: "We can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract."

Poetry! It was still possible to make horror and grief in wartime seem almost beautiful. Americans could still have illusions of honor and dignity when they thought of war. The illusion of human you-know-what. That is what I call it: "The you-know-what."

And may I note parenthetically that I have at this point exceeded by a dozen words or more the whole of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. I am windy.

Killing industrial quantities of defenseless human families, whether by old-fashioned apparatus, or by newfangled contraptions from universities such as this one, in the expectation of gaining military or diplomatic advantage thereby, may not be such a hot idea after all. Does it work?

Its enthusiasts, its fans, if I may call them that, assume that leaders of political entities we find inconvenient or worse, are capable of pity for their own people. If they see or at least hear about fricasseed women and children and old people who looked and talked like themselves, maybe even relatives, they will be incapacitated by weepiness. So goes the theory, as I understand it.

Anyone who believes that might as well go all the way, and make Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy icons of our foreign policy.

I thank you for your attention.

Kurt Vonnegut is a novelist living on Long Island who survived the bombing of Dresden as an American prisoner of war there, and wrote a book about it.

Continued from page 12

something very simple: to show the effect of the bomb—not to blame young American GIs or the pilots who flew the mission. But, by god, you've got the American Legion coming along, those phony professional patriots, and those cowardly pseudo-scholars caved in completely. And of course those pointy-headed congressmen we now have running things: the phoniness is so patent. And they're getting away with it because the cards are stacked. Our press, our electronic media, doesn't really cover the events.

Why are the American people so afraid to look at their history? Even the French are acknowledging their conflicted past in World War II.

We're much like the pope and the Catholic church. Some years ago, there was a pontifical birth control council that voted overwhelmingly to accept birth control as non-sinful. It was a tremendous thing. But the pope overrode their decision. How can you admit for so many years that you've been wrong? If the church could overthrow the truth of Galileo, it would do it tomorrow. And so it is with us. We can't admit we were wrong for dropping the bomb.

How can you say little Harry was wrong? Why is Harry honored so much? And why do I dislike him so much? He's so popular now. Everybody loves him. He's a little hack who's been glorified, and it's simple as that. Truman said he made the decision to drop the bomb without losing one night's sleep over it—which I have to doubt. I mean, I do consider him human. Alperovitz says in his book that Truman did bring up the subject gratuitously on occasion.

But we just love the myths we live by. To uncover a truth of the past, a harsh truth, is very hard. It's much easier not to. In America, we have something over and beyond denial. I call it erasure of the past. We're suffering from a national Alzheimer's disease. It's sort of a self-imposed amnesia.

What was the effect of World War II on the American psyche?

You've got to go back and look around in talking about World War II. You have to talk about the Depression, because they were two contiguous events, two key, traumatic moments in our history. Now tribute should be paid to the New Deal and the WPA, and the work it did in saving the self-esteem of millions of people and families. We hear today about the role of government and the heavy hand that it has on our lives. But the very ones who decry too much government are the ones whose granddaddies' and daddies' asses were saved by government. The WPA saved the town of Dixon, Ill., Ronnie Reagan's hometown. His father got a job with the Works Progress Administration. Multiply him by millions, and you understand the enormous impact of those programs. But even the New Deal didn't stop the Depression. There were still 11 million people who weren't working in 1939. It was the war, ironically enough, tragically enough, that ended the Depression.

We were the only combatant on either side not really touched by World War II. Obviously, the families of the

men and women who were killed were affected. They grieved inconsolably. But that's it. For the rest of us, we weren't touched by it, no matter what we say. Because we weren't affected physically, we became the most prosperous country in the world. A new prosperity hit, and with it came something else: a new attitude toward class. See, we don't use the term working class, because that's un-American. That's European, that's alien.

Ironically, it was the very same New Deal programs and World War II veterans benefits—designed to help the working class—that really eliminated the idea of the working class in America. When the boys came back from the war they had the GI Bill of Rights. Families that had never dreamed of college suddenly had a kid going to college on the GI Bill. And then government helped with mortgages on veterans' homes. And where were the homes? In a new kind of suburb. Until World War II, people living in suburbs by and large were considered rich. But suddenly everyone is moving to a home in the suburbs. And once you're in the suburbs you start thinking middle-class. There are two cars in every garage, there's some prosperity. And once you start thinking middle-class, you forget background, you forget heritage.

According to your book, one of the good things about "The Good War" was that, to a certain extent, it broke down ethnic, class and racial lines and brought us all together as one country.

Seemingly. It brought us together for a moment. But we know that black soldiers' experiences tell you something wholly different about the war. The German POWs got better treatment than they did. They'll tell you about that.

But let's talk about the Vietnam War, where there was actual fraternity among some black and white soldiers. In some cases, black and the white soldiers really helped each other out. But they were helping each other do what? Kill Vietnamese kids. It was a fraternity in the slaughter of innocents. That's the irony of the whole thing. Some fraternity.

In "The Good War" you asked whether a society must experience war in order to understand horror, and I was wondering if you've found an answer to that question.

Well, that's the question. That's the big one. Because we were never bombed during the war, because we didn't experience the horrors of war, World War II gave America the feeling that nobody could touch us: We're big, we're fantastic. By God, we're John Wayne. We can go anywhere in the world.

Admiral Gene La Rocque, who heads the Center for Defense Information [a Washington-based group critical of excessive military spending] says the United States has been in more military adventures beyond its borders than any empire in the history of the human race. Far more than the Roman Empire. Think of all the military adventures since World War II—scores and scores and scores.

I can remember being on the high school debating team, it was 1925, '26—I was 14, 15 years old. And one of the favorite subjects was, resolved: Should we grant the Philip-

pires their independence? And it occurs to me now, who the hell are we to grant them their independence to begin with?

Perhaps experiencing war is the only way for us to learn. And yet I'm not sure now that even experiencing it would change us. There's a woman in one of my books who came to St. Louis out of the Deep South in the 1920s. "People forgets murdering," she told me. "People forgets. They forgets about war even when they lose someone dear to them. They forgets."

If people forgets, then what difference will it make? You hope that the human species is growing in enlightenment with the centuries. Some superstitions have been eliminated, it's true. We don't nail people to the cross anymore, but we crucify them in other ways.

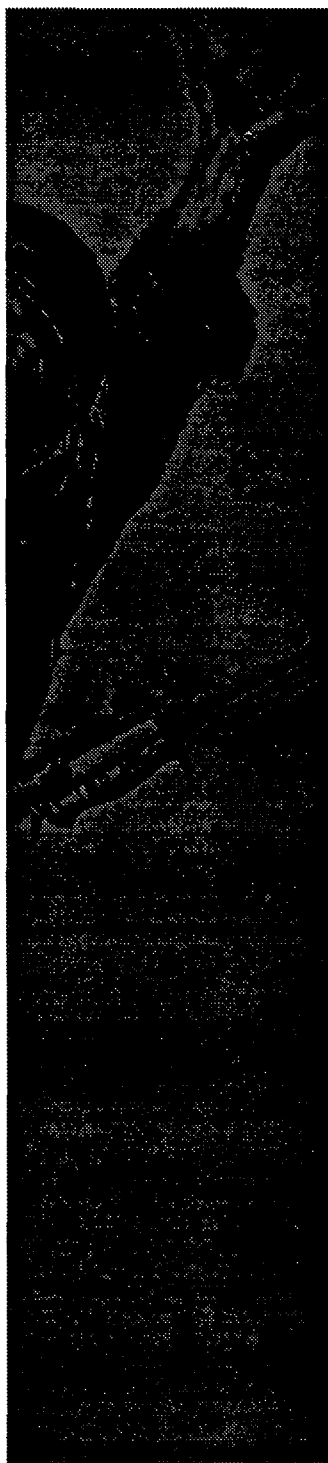
Man is saint and sinner, he's devil and angel. Man did "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "The Marriage of Figaro." Man did that. I mean man, woman, the species. But they also did Auschwitz and Hiroshima. So man is capable of both. When in doubt, read Mark Twain. Twain was the one who said, man is the only animal that can blush, and the only one with reason to do so.

Have we as a nation lost hope?

I really don't know. I'm far less optimistic than I was, say, 30 years ago—far less optimistic. Now the Cold War is over, the evil empire is dead, and still we go on. We have a Pentagon budget that is so bloated it's comical. We've got the bastards in today, they don't mind cutting money for kids and poor people, no. Our values are distorted and cockeyed.

But still, you know, throughout our history we've been saved by people who step out for a cause that's unpopular or unfashionable, yet turns out to be enlightened a century later. Would the human species be around today were it not for these people? You wonder. Wouldn't we just be left with the cockroaches and the kelp and that's all, were it not for these people—the people we call the goofballs, the crazies, the agitators, the troublemakers.

In *American Dreams: Lost and Found* I quote Jessie de la Cruz. She's a farmworker, now retired. And Jessie says, "In Mexico we have a phrase, '*La esperanza muere el último.*' " It means hope dies last. That's what it's about, hope dies last. ◀



WAR STORIES

Patriotism and prejudice

*For African-Americans,
World War II
was a fight
against
fascism
abroad and
racism at
home.*

By Salim Muwakkil

Tim Black was drafted in August 1943, right after large-scale racial violence erupted in Detroit and Harlem. "It was no secret that the U.S. government was using the military draft to sweep the city streets of young black men," he recalls. Now 76, Black is a retired professor of cultural anthropology and sociology at Chicago City Colleges. He is one of hundreds of thousands of African-American men who served in the armed forces during World War II and came home eager to exercise some of the freedoms for which so many had risked their lives.

Black's imputation of an ulterior motive for the draft echoes the suspicions of many African-American men in the summer of 1943. According to Herbert Shapiro's 1988 book, *White Violence And Black Response*, 242 racial battles took place in 47 American

cities during 1943, provoking widespread fears that the country would erupt into outright racial warfare unless tensions were defused. Conscribing young black and white men—the primary antagonists—for duty in the armed forces seemed as good a way as any to ease growing racial animosities in the cities.

Throughout the early 1940s thousands of white and black men were thrown together on military posts across the country. But if putting them in uniform was a policy meant to defuse race conflict, it succeeded only in changing its venue. During World War II, as Americans were fighting against the forces of fascism, racist violence remained a prominent feature of U.S. society. "In addition to the usual accounts of lynchings and police brutality there were numerous violent clashes between whites and blacks at United States Army camps," Shapiro writes.

These racial clashes, though routine, were seldom mentioned in the mainstream press. They were well-covered in black newspapers, however, and black leaders pointed to the irony of the black soldier's predicament: Here were African-Americans fighting for a country that had yet to grant them the rights of full citizenship. In June 1943, the NAACP issued a "Statement to the Nation" that criticized President Franklin D. Roosevelt for maintaining segregated armed forces and failing to address the violence against black GIs.

The statement decried the hypocrisy with which America condemned Aryan fascism abroad while promoting white supremacy at home, noting that "the continued ill treatment of Negroes in uniform, both on military reservations and in many civilian communities, is disgraceful. Negroes in the uniform of the nation have been beaten, mobbed, killed and lynched." Taking a more hopeful tone, black newspapers initiated the "Double V Program," a campaign designed to use the war's anti-fascist momentum to help topple racial barriers on the home front. The two "V"s symbolized victories over domestic racism and European fascism.

Many black troops were contemptuous of the black press' Double V campaign. "We hated the black newspapers for their constant appeals to the government to send us into action," recalls Nelson Peery, a black Minnesotan who served in the Pacific Theater during the war. In his lyrical autobiography, *Black Fire: The Making of an American Revolutionary*, Peery argues that the black press' aim was "to buy first-class citizenship with the blood of the Negro soldier." Well-to-do black publishers bolstered their credibility as community leaders by promoting patriotism among black troops.

For Tim Black and other African-American servicemen, the contradictions of black patriotism were clear. After induction, Black wound up in a segregated unit at Camp

Lee in Michigan, where, he recalls, racial tension surpassed anything he had encountered on city streets. "Quite simply, the races didn't get along," Black says. "There was strict segregation. All black troops were commanded by white officers. There was an official assumption that black troops were incapable of complex reasoning. It was incredibly demeaning."

Uniformed blacks were specifically targeted off base as well. "When we would go to town, black soldiers were treated with even more disdain than black civilians, according to the American tradition," Black recalls. "Our existence reminded white Americans of their rank hypocrisy. So we became hated figures for those who preferred not to be reminded."

Despite blacks' long history of battlefield valor, many in leadership had yet to be convinced that African-Americans were useful soldiers. Ever since the war of independence that spawned the United States, black Americans had taken up arms in defense of their ungrateful nation.

During the Civil War, for example, most black leaders supported Union forces and the white Republicans who commanded them, a natural alliance since most blacks had always considered themselves at war with the Confederacy. Of course, in fighting for the Union, African-Americans were fighting for their own freedom. The war emboldened and enfranchised blacks, but it also provoked an intense white backlash, a historic pattern that has routinely repeated itself ever since.

Black soldiers were among the first to serve in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Soldiers from the all-black 9th and 10th Cavalry accompanied Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders on their charge up Cuba's San Juan Hill at a time when thousands of Southern blacks were being lynched.

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, 140,000 black troops were sent to France, and 40,000 saw combat. Most blacks supported W.E.B. Du Bois' arguments for black involvement in the war. Du Bois was convinced that black participation in the Allied victory would help expand democ-



matic rights and halt the epidemic of racial lynchings. The all-black 369th Infantry Regiment was the first American unit to see action in the war and two soldiers from the unit were the first American enlisted men—white or black—to earn the French Croix de Guerre. After the war, however, the raised expectations of African-Americans collided with the hostility and fear of those dedicated to the racist status quo in the notorious racial violence of the summer of 1919.

Though blacks had long served the country with distinction, the United States had yet to integrate its armed forces. An official policy statement issued in 1940 by the War Department said that intermingling the races would “produce situations destructive to morale and detrimental to the preparation for national defense.”

“The military never dreamed of using the black soldiers as anything but hewers of wood and drawers of water,” writes Peery. “They sent them into the Quartermaster, Port, Water Supply, Graves Registration, Laundry, and Engineer Battalions. These combat support groups freed up white men to fight a white man’s war in defense of a white man’s country.”

Dempsey J. Travis, a GI who later became a prominent businessman and one of Chicago’s few black millionaires, recounts his time at Camp Shenango in Pennsylvania in his 1981 book, *An Autobiography of Black Chicago*. “From the moment I stepped off the train,” he writes, “it was borne in on me that as a black man, I had no status, no rights, no dignity, no claim to human treatment.”

“We could not use the white PX—the only PX—or the white recreational facilities,” he notes. “For us there were no roads, no movie theater. It was as if I had suddenly been thrust into one of my relatives’ stories about the Old South: blacks were supposed to efface themselves, to wait around for whites and not get in the way.” Later Travis found that some German prisoners of war were located at Shenango, “and they were treated better than black American soldiers.”

The tensions at Camp Shenango eventually exploded into a full-scale race riot, and Travis ended up taking three bullets from white military police. “As I lay there preparing to die, my thoughts were not of heaven or hell, but of hate,” he recalls. “I was cursing the darkness, and I was bleeding with hate. On the way to the hospital, I heard the ambulance dri-

ver say to the medic, ‘why the hell do we shoot our own men?’ ‘Who said they were men?’ the medic said. ‘We shoot niggers like rabbits where I come from.’ ”

During World War II, African-American servicemen performed almost every soldierly duty. Peery saw combat in the South Pacific. Black was close to the action, providing support for combat troops in Europe. Travis recovered from his wounds and spent his 40 months of service stateside, eventually distinguishing himself as a PX manager. But all three shared an experience common to black soldiers: debilitating bouts with homegrown racism.

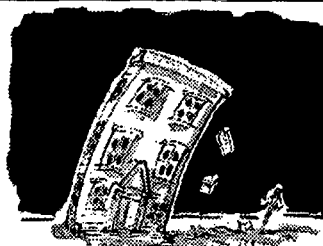
By comparison, black troops enjoyed good social relations with European civilians. “[Europeans] were truly puzzled by the racial antagonisms between white and black Americans,” Black says. “In many of the racial disputes that occurred on U.S. bases in Europe, the Europeans would take the side of the black soldiers. American leadership noticed our affinities with the Europeans and sought to break it up,” Black recalls. “While I was in Britain, Gen. Eisenhower issued an order preventing black and white soldiers from going to the same towns on the same nights. He also issued an order relegating black GIs to the crummiest towns.”

All three men concur that the return of blacks from World War II marked a new step in African-Americans’ ongoing quest for racial justice. The war unleashed new frustration with racial injustice and set the stage for a broader discussion of the nation’s social apartheid. The war spurred the growth of the modern civil rights movement, it added new dimensions to the great migration of blacks from the South to the industrial North, and it dramatized the manifest unfairness of discrimination in employment, housing and politics.

The war also illuminated the international implication of this country’s racial struggle. The moderate NAACP and more radical National Negro Congress both presented documents to the newly created United Nations calling for an international investigation of the U.S. treatment of its black citizens. As far as black leaders were concerned, the Allies’ victory over European fascism was a victory over racism. Unfortunately, they were proved wrong.

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WAR STORIES

The workers' war

W

hen World War II ended 50 years ago, American workers could reasonably believe that they had won two wars—the war against the Axis powers, and the war at home to gain organized power in the workplace.

*In its
accommodation
with the U.S.
war economy,
American labor
lost its way.*

By David Moberg

Though the heroic sit-down strikes of the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions in the 1930s are now largely associated with the rebirth of the labor movement, unions grew even faster during World War II. Union membership increased from 9 million to 14 million during the war years, with the CIO alone doubling its membership rolls.

But this dramatic union growth—resulting largely from an accommodation struck with the federal government—came at a price of compromised independence, democracy and militancy. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, most unions pledged not to strike. In

return, the federal government offered unions a measure of security, but not the degree of recognition and influence that labor leaders sought. The deal set the tone for the emergence of a postwar labor movement that pursued narrow contractual and political gains at the expense of long-term vision and growth. In this respect, the war period did far more to determine the fate of organized labor for the next five decades than did the more fabled era of 1930s organizing.

Unions retained their strongholds after World War II—a dramatic contrast to the aftermath of World War I, when a similar accommodationist strategy didn't prevent the federal government from brutally repressing the labor movement. At war's end, unions emerged as major players in the mainstream of American life and politics—though very much in the role of a “junior partner” with business and government.

In a strong postwar economy, when the popular mood was hostile to radicalism, these new, “responsible” unions could still win victories for their members, even if such gains often meant a growing division of haves and have-nots within the ranks of workers—for example, between those with union contracts and health insurance and those without.

Despite their overall gains in prestige and power, many CIO unions lost their broad sense of mission. Within the CIO, social democrats like Walter Reuther, as well as socialists, Communists and other labor-movement leftists, envisioned a society in which workers had power to influence the overall direction of corporations and government. But in the wake of the war, CIO unions became increasingly bureaucratized, as well as a vested (if still subsidiary) member of a liberal establishment, rather than a powerful—and often radical—voice for all workers.

It was a unique moment, and the union formula that emerged out of World War II has proven weak and unsustainable. Today, in a much-expanded economy, the total number of union members is only slightly higher, and organized labor's share of the workforce is far less than half of what it was at the end of the war. Unions are now marginalized politically, institutionally insecure and floundering without clear direction.

Where did the prosperous postwar labor movement go off course? To begin to trace an answer—and to sound out prospects for organized labor's future renewal—it is necessary to revisit those crucial formative years of wartime growth and compromise.

A year after the great CIO upsurge in 1937—when breakthrough efforts like the General Motors sitdown strike seemed to presage a new era of democratic militancy—organizing ground to a halt. The economy was in recession, and conservatives in Congress were gaining

ground. By 1941, when production for the burgeoning war effort picked up, unions once again began to score big gains in organizing, with strikes against anti-union diehards such as Ford, the meatpacking industry and Little Steel. War production meant full employment, and full employment pushed up wages, helped unionization and weakened barriers to blacks and women workers.

The key issue as the war approached, however, was labor's relationship to the government. Mineworkers President John L. Lewis, who had launched the CIO (but left it in 1942), broke with President Roosevelt in 1940, opposed entry into World War II and insisted on labor independence. But Amalgamated Clothing Workers President Sidney Hillman strongly backed FDR and the Democratic Party, championed the fight against fascism and looked forward to government-labor cooperation. Hillman—whose views prevailed in the CIO—became labor's chief representative on wartime production boards, and he also served as Roosevelt's leading envoy to labor.

Roosevelt granted labor just enough concessions to retain its loyalty while resisting many—but not all—initiatives of business, the military and conservative politicians in both parties to use the war as an excuse to crack down on labor. As the war progressed, the balance between concessions to unions and the anti-union coalition continually shifted. For example, the CIO largely succumbed to pay caps established early in the war and to the 1943 incentive pay proposals, which many workers saw as a reversion to piece-work—as well as a means for management to accelerate the pace of production. On the other hand, unions got around the pay-hike limits by expanding health care and other benefits (a pattern that would later tragically weaken labor's fight for universal national health insurance).

In exchange for labor's voluntary "no-strike" pledge, the National War Labor Board awarded unions "maintenance of membership" in the organized plants, which largely guaranteed union membership of all workers in plants with a contract. Later, cooperative unions also were awarded with an employer check-off of union dues. Membership swelled with the expanding labor force—though the new members often had little understanding of unions and were less committed than the movement's founders. In any event, organization coffers were flush.

But workers were often frustrated over conditions at

work—pay inequities, speed-up, harsh discipline, slow handling of grievances—as well as pay increases that didn't keep pace with inflation. By 1943 a wave of wildcat strikes rippled through the ranks of several unions, testing the ability of union officials to maintain discipline, as they had promised. In theory, workers, like the general public, supported the no-strike pledge, but when it came down to their conditions at work, they wanted action.

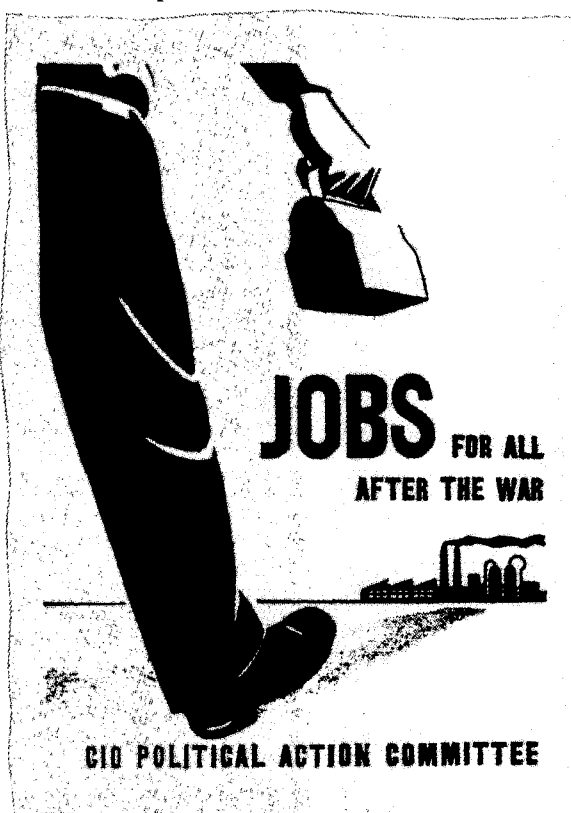
The CIO, especially the Communists within it, thought that producing for the war was paramount and ardently fought against rank-and-file wildcat strikes. CIO leaders strongly supported the war and hewed to the terms of their deal with the administration. Lewis and some American

Federation of Labor (AFL) unions were less tied to Roosevelt and more willing to pursue traditional collective-bargaining aims, such as striking for pay hikes above government-approved limits.

Yet "the net result" of labor's bargain with government, writes Nelson Lichtenstein, in his excellent 1982 book, *The War at Home: The CIO in World War II*, "was an increasingly bureaucratic and politically timid industrial union federation." CIO unions became evermore dependent on the Democratic Party and distant from any notion of political independence. They launched the first-ever political action committee, which became a major fundraiser for the Democrats. The CIO's PAC never aroused strong rank-and-file enthusiasm, but it helped cement a closer link

between labor leaders and the Democratic Party. And the new respectability labor leaders enjoyed in joining ranks with the foreign policy elite during the war effort smoothed the transition to labor's support of the Cold War.

This held especially true for the conservatives in the movement, who took advantage of the postwar political climate to attack the radical opposition. Union officials consolidated more power at the top and became increasingly heavy-handed in dealing with dissidents. This dynamic culminated after World War II in internal purges of Communists in 1949 and 1950. To be sure, the Communists frequently discredited themselves, especially in their subservience to Soviet dictates. Nor were they champions of internal union democracy. Nevertheless, as Steve Rossworm argued in a 1992 collection of essays, *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, Communist organizers were often militant, creative unionists whose expulsion weakened the postwar labor



movement. The expulsion of the Communists was simply one dramatic episode in bureaucratic concentration of power within the labor movement. But it had repercussions that extended far beyond the Communists who were purged. Communists had been associated with advocacy of black workers' rights, and because of redbaiting within the unions, labor leaders would later face greater difficulties winning support for the civil rights movement among workers who saw it as a Commie plot.

By contrast, Robert H. Zieger, in his comprehensive and illuminating new history, *The CIO: 1935-1955*, concludes that the expulsion of the Communists was necessary—though Zieger, too, acknowledges that the movement was greatly weakened by wartime compromises. He faults the postwar CIO for its failures to organize aggressively and to champion adequately the causes of blacks and women. However, even if unions had no alternatives to the compromises they made—a matter still open to dispute—those compromises undeniably gave definitive shape to the current impasse the labor movement faces.

Much of the current stalemate stems from the alignment of organized labor with the state. "For working people and their movements, the state liberated as well as leashed; it offered a real as well as a counterfeit liberty," Melvyn Dubofsky concludes in his 1994 study, *State and Labor in Modern America*. With the passage of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act—which greatly restricted unions' rights to act in support of each other, weakened union security and gave employers new powers to fight organizing drives—it was clear that the state was tugging hard on the leash.

In the late 1940s, the labor movement could have returned to the grass-roots tactics of the 1930s in order to push the limits of the postwar labor regime. Unions might have been able, for example, to force the government to strike a different balance more favorable to labor by narrowing the scope of exclusive managerial rights. Indeed, such an outcome seemed possible during the strike wave of 1946. But the wider conservative shift in postwar politics made any grass-roots campaign far more difficult to mount. Also, the bureaucratized unions that emerged from the war were far less likely to spearhead any such campaign to begin with—

or to court any displeasure on the part of their government and business "partners." The "new men of power," as C. Wright Mills described postwar union leaders, had a greater stake in defending their gains than in expanding the labor movement. They also had more faith in their insider influence within the establishment than in challenging it from the outside. In addition, the Cold War, combined with the unique bubble of postwar prosperity, dampened the prospects for such a fight.

Now the labor movement must once again establish its own independent power. The current AFL-CIO presidential race, with Service Employees President John Sweeney almost certain to defeat AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Tom Donahue, could be a sign that unions may yet shake themselves out of their depressed torpor.

But Sweeney's victory, should it come to pass, would only be a starting point. Labor leaders also need to develop stronger alliances with other social movements and more forcefully make workers' rights central to political debates. Regardless of whether labor chooses to work within the Democratic Party or support a third party, unions unquestionably must develop a stronger, independent political presence and not just pump dollars uselessly into weak Democratic campaigns.

Also, the pendulum now must swing away from the labor movement's top-heavy bureaucratic power structure—perhaps the most damaging legacy of World War II. In surveying the upward shift of power within the movement, Dubofsky argues that the centralized structure of American unions offered a measure of solidarity and collective action that might be threatened by greater union democracy. But especially in contemporary America, solidarity and democracy are complementary ideas. In more democratic and participatory unions, members are more likely to be politically active and to help organize new workers, who in turn will find unions more attractive if they are more democratic. The relationship may not always be this straightforward—but it is nevertheless critical to the revival of the U.S. labor movement. Many union leaders now argue that management should give workers greater rights on the job to use their brains and participate in management decisions. That argument applies with greater force to the unions themselves.

Recent history suggests that just as the postwar prosperity was ephemeral, so too was business accommodation to the new labor movement. Corporations now routinely fight any organizing drive, work to weaken labor protections in law, shift investments to locations with low wages and no unions, and enforce increasingly harsh conditions at work. Labor's postwar place at the political table—always a weak and minority position—has now virtually vanished, even within a Democrat Party nominally in control of the White House. Only clamorous pressure from below, at work and in politics, will lead government in the coming years to once again strike a new deal for labor. But if and when it happens, labor should remember from the experience of World War II and after just how tenuous—and costly—such deals can be. ◀

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POLITICS

Alliance for progress

W

*Proportional
representation
has spurred
third-party
efforts in
New Zealand.*

By **Penelope Whitney
and Peter Camejo**

When New Zealanders go to the polls in next year's national elections, for the first time they will be electing their Parliament in a proportional representation system. For more than 60 years, New Zealand's Parliament has been chosen by a winner-take-all electoral system similar to that in the United States. As in America, this system has ensured that political power is traded between two major parties: the National Party, traditionally the party of big business and the wealthy, and the Labor Party, long supported by the working class, liberals and the Maori and Pacific Islander minorities. Despite the presence of smaller third parties, the first-past-the-post arrangement has consistently tended to sideline any genuine opposition to the two-party power monopoly.

That is due to change in 1996, thanks largely to the effort of the Alliance, a young coalition of five

political parties that represents diverse constituencies, from indigenous communities to environmentalists to disaffected deserters from the Labor Party. Although Alliance candidates garnered only 18 percent of the vote in the 1993 election, the coalition achieved its major strategic objective: the ratification of "mixed member proportional representation," or MMP. To persuade voters to approve the measure, the Alliance joined forces with the Electoral Reform Coalition, a group that had worked for nine years to get a proportional representation referendum on the ballot. Despite the millions of dollars spent by business interests and the Labor and National parties on an anti-MMP ad campaign, the measure passed with 52 percent of the vote.

This move for electoral reform follows a particularly dark decade for New Zealand, one that saw a severe economic downturn and the dismantling of the country's cradle-to-grave welfare system. Between 1985 and 1992, New Zealand's economy actually shrank. The decline resulted partly from the difficulties of adapting to competitive global markets as the British Commonwealth's trade protections were being phased out. And neoliberal ideologues in the Labor Party only fueled this decline by presiding over the collapse of New Zealand's welfare state. In 1993, UNICEF cited dramatic changes in national social policy as the cause of massive unemployment, a widening gap between rich and poor, and the highest youth suicide rate among industrialized countries.

Not surprisingly, this has had dramatic political consequences. "An anger has begun to brew that has changed New Zealand society irrevocably," says Sandra Lee, one of two Alliance MPs elected in 1993. "You have people cutting their political ties with Labor and National whose families have been with the parties for generations."

Oddly enough, it was Labor, the putative party of the left, that initiated the attack on New Zealand's social democracy. In 1984, Labor Finance Minister Roger Douglas introduced a number of supply-side policies—derisively dubbed "Rogernomics"—that included deregulation, privatization and tax-cutting. In 1986, the Labor government slashed the top marginal income-tax rate from 66 percent to 33 percent and, to compensate for lost revenue, imposed a flat goods and services tax of 12.5 percent—a measure that hit the poor especially hard. Privatization, Douglas' main strategy for reducing New Zealand's budget deficits, backfired. Government-run businesses, including the state banking system and the airline, insurance, printing and mining industries, were sold to foreign investors too cheaply, and the government debt—which was promised to decline with privatization—nearly tripled between 1984 and 1992.

Within the Labor Party, only Jim Anderton, an MP and one-time party president, had the temerity to oppose Rogernomics publicly, decrying its assault on workers' rights and

social programs. His dissidence came to a head in 1989, when he abstained from voting on the privatization of the state bank—a measure he opposed because, among other reasons, it violated Labor Party policy. The Labor caucus expelled him—without protest from fellow MPs. Anderton resigned from the party and, with other ex-Laborites, formed the New Labor Party (NLP). Anderton was the only Labor MP to break ranks with the old party, but thousands of party members rallied to support him.

In the aftermath of the elections that swept the National Party back into power in 1990, it became clear to activists in all parties that National and Labor were pushing the same agenda. In 1991, the NLP, the Maori party Mana Motuhake, the Greens and the Democratic Party came together as the Alliance. They were later joined by the Liberal Party, led by two first-term MPs who broke away from the National Party when they became disenchanted with its rightward shift.

The Alliance scored its first victory in 1992, when it won control of the municipal authority that manages the regional assets of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. Running on an anti-privatization platform, the coalition polled an unexpected 42 percent of the vote. Not only did the Alliance keep its promise not to sell off Auckland's fiscally troubled port, but it reformed the port's management and successfully restructured its debt.

The National and Labor parties now view the Alliance as a serious threat, especially after its surprising showing last June, when it came close to winning a by-election in the National stronghold district of Selwyn. Campaigning on a solid platform of Alliance policies, Democratic Party President John Wright took more than 40 percent of the vote. Labor fell to a historic low of 10 percent.

MMP promises to enhance the influence of the Alliance. Under the new system, voters will elect a 120-member parliament, in which roughly half of the seats will go to candidates who win elections in local districts. The other half will be allotted to parties based on their percentage of the general vote. The 1993 election results illustrate MMP's advantage to third parties: Though it polled 18 percent of the vote, the Alliance walked away with only two of 99 seats in Parliament. The winner-take-all electoral system had stopped the Alliance by tiny margins in many districts. With the same percentage of votes under MMP, the Alliance would have taken at least 20 seats.

Alliance leaders have taken important steps to strengthen the Alliance internally, moving it closer to being a party itself rather than just a coalition. The five parties agreed to end their individual veto rights and passed a motion to change the makeup of the coalition's ruling body: Now almost half the representatives are chosen directly by regional Alliance caucuses, not just appointed by the individual parties.

With the new proportional representation system on the horizon, the two traditional parties are struggling to come to terms with their new rivals. Rumors abound of possible splits within Labor and National, and a growing contingent in

Labor favors forming a bloc with the Alliance. In fact, that faction has adopted a party-wide policy of refraining from publicly denouncing the Alliance.

In a move to exploit political uncertainty, Matt McCarten, a former union organizer and the Alliance's chief political strategist, has been meeting with labor leaders. New Zealand's embattled labor unions, which have seen their membership plummet to 18 percent of the workforce from 46 percent in 1975, are slowly dissolving their institutional ties to the Labor Party. Of the 26 unions once affiliated with Labor only four remain, and many vow to endorse the Alliance in the 1996 election.

National polls report that the majority of New Zealanders favor some kind of Alliance coalition government in 1996, with a Labor-Alliance coalition the most popular of all. "The business class is frantic," reports McCarten. "They don't like it at all."

In a May 6 editorial, the prominent *National Business Review* warned: "A grand coalition of the left ... is not in the country's best interests. ... The restoration of trade-union power, the return to collective bargaining and the forcible extension of equal-employment opportunity and pay equity into the private sector are not the policies that will enhance economic growth or cut unemployment."

The Alliance knows that it is far from likely to gain a parliamentary majority any time soon, but it can form a potent opposition. Under MMP, National and Labor will lose much of their influence, finding it more difficult to form a government on their own. Because margins of party preference in New Zealand have been so narrow and because the Alliance is certain to bite deeply into the National and Labor vote, the next government will almost certainly have to be a coalition. In any case, the Alliance is poised to win 25 to 30 seats in Parliament.

MMP will also boost the Alliance's financial resources. Each MP in New Zealand is given a budget of close to \$700,000 per year to cover staffing and expenses. McCarten estimates that this will give the Alliance as much as \$60 million to work with over the next three years, allowing it to augment considerably its current full-time staff of nine. Unlike other parties, the Alliance plans to make sure that the new staff is appointed by, and loyal to, the coalition, not the MPs.

Meanwhile, Labor and Alliance aren't even talking. Labor says it will only consider a coalition after the vote, but the Alliance refuses to engage in post-election negotiations. "We will discuss our policies with anyone before an election, but we will not enter any coalition after an election that involves us having to trade away our policies," Anderton told the *Dominion*, a Wellington-based newspaper. "We want voters to understand that and know what they are voting for: parties like Labor that will betray them or parties like us that won't."

◀ **Penelope Whitney** is a San Francisco-based freelance writer who lived in New Zealand in 1994. **Peter Camejo** is the CEO of Progressive Asset Management, and was the international keynote speaker at the December 1994 Alliance conference in Auckland.

M E D I A

Safety Net

M

Apocryphal studies and apocalyptic rhetoric are fueling the debate over "cyberporn."

By David Futrelle

arty Rimm learned early on the value of a well-placed statistic. Nearly a decade and a half ago, as a 16-year-old student at Atlantic City High School, he caused a stir in the local media with a study purporting to show that 64 percent of the students at his school had gambled in local casinos. The study was roundly criticized by the casinos themselves—and it didn't exactly help the flamboyant high schooler's credibility that he disguised himself as an Arab sheik in an attempt (successful, he contends) to infiltrate the Playboy Hotel and Casino. But the study received a great deal of play in the media, and led the state legislature to raise the age of legal gambling to 21.

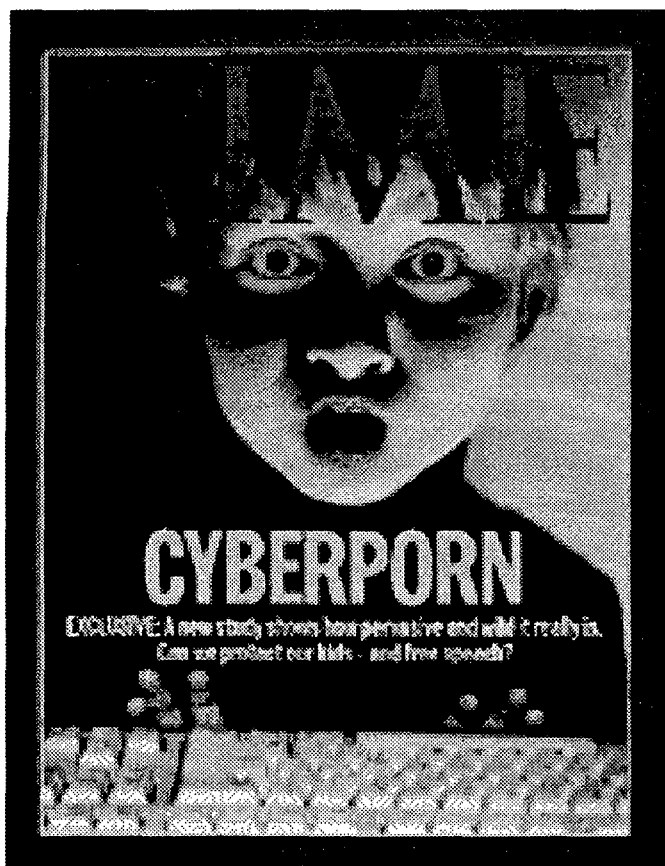
Today, another one of Rimm's statistics has pushed itself into public consciousness in a big way: his claim, highlighted in a recent *Time* magazine cover story on "cyberporn," that some

83.5 percent of images on the Usenet newsgroups available through the Internet are pornographic. The figure, which Rimm first advanced in a *Georgetown Law Journal* article, has been cited on ABC's *Nightline*; it's been mentioned on the floor of the Senate. It's routinely invoked in newspaper stories and television debates. In a media culture built on soundbites, it's become the soundbite of the moment.

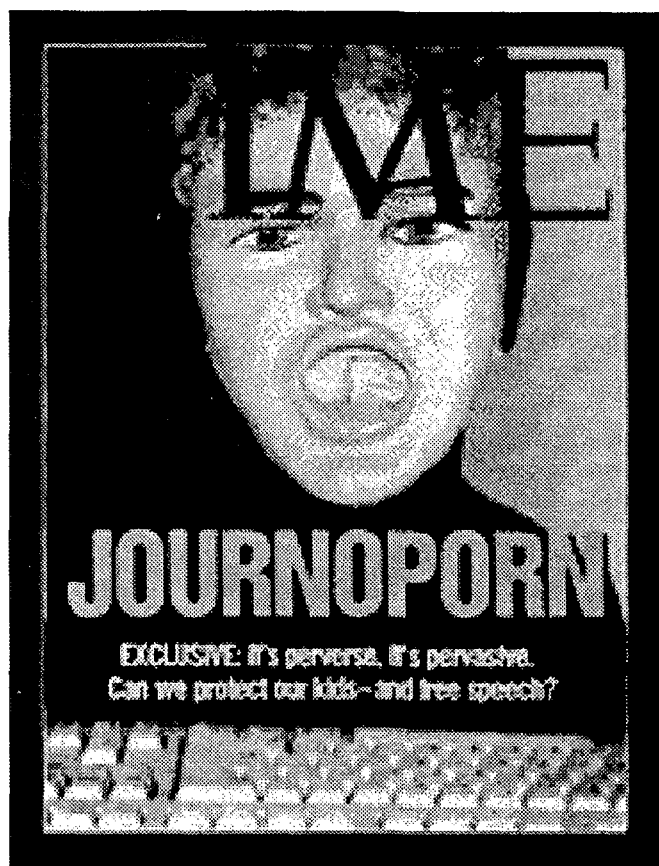
There's only one problem with the statistic: it's almost certainly wrong—no more accurate or scientifically valid than Joe McCarthy's famous claim that he had assembled a list of 53 known Communists in the State Department. There is no question that there is a considerable amount of pornography available online, mainly through commercial "adult" Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) and Usenet "binaries" groups, where images are posted in coded form. A quick glance at the binaries groups reveals that `alt.binaries.pictures.erotica.blondes` fills up much more quickly than `alt.binaries.pictures.furniture`.

But as anyone who has seriously attempted to study the elusive Net will tell you, basic facts about the beast are terribly difficult, if not impossible, to pin down with any degree of precision. Even Brian Reid, a respected researcher at Digital Equipment Corp. responsible for the development of sophisticated statistical techniques for measuring Usenet readership, acknowledges that his numbers—based on aggregate data from an extensive list of sites around the world—may be off by as much as a factor of 10. Rimm, who conducted his research as an undergraduate at Carnegie-Mellon University, based his number on a much smaller, and almost certainly unrepresentative, sample—a one-week survey of just 32 Usenet newsgroups featuring "binary" image files.

Since its prominent mention in *Time*'s July 3 issue, Rimm's study—baroquely titled "Marketing Pornography on the Information Superhighway: A Survey of 917,410 Images, Descriptions, Short Stories, and Animations Downloaded 8.5 Million Times by Consumers in Over 2,000 Cities in Forty Countries, Provinces, and Territories"—has provoked hundreds of pages of commentary online and off, including detailed, and devastating, line-by-line critiques from notable academics and researchers, some of whom Rimm himself had cited approvingly in his text. Much of Rimm's study of Usenet, for example, is based on the techniques developed by Digital's Reid. Yet when he first saw Rimm's study, Reid was stunned. "I am so distressed by its lack of scientific credibility that I don't even know where to begin critiquing it," he wrote in a review of the study posted online. "In this study I have trouble finding measurement techniques that are not flawed." (See "Rimm shot" on page 27.)



At left is the cover of *Time*'s July 3 issue. At right is a parody from the *HotWired* Web site.



Rimm has hardly emerged from the controversy unscathed. Stories detailing the study's flaws have run in publications ranging from the online newsletter *Cyberwire Dispatch* to the *New York Times*. Philip Elmer-Dewitt, the reporter who wrote the *Time* cover story, has admitted in online debates that he "screwed up" in his handling of the report, and in a follow-up article in *Time* on the controversy he acknowledged Rimm's growing credibility problem. Carnegie-Mellon is looking into the possible ethical problems involved in Rimm's analysis of the computer activities and downloading patterns of some 3,000 students and staff who, for the most part, believed their records were private. Some of those listed as "contributors" in the study's footnotes have explicitly disassociated themselves from the project. And Rimm was dropped from a list of witnesses testifying at the recent Senate Judiciary hearing on children and computer pornography.

But to focus merely on the flaws of Rimm's study is to miss the larger point. How is it that an inconsequential and incompetent study—one put together by a university undergraduate and world-class eccentric—managed to land itself at the center of national debate in the first place? In part, the blame has to go to *Time*, which transformed a minor media event—the study's publication in the *Georgetown Law Journal*—into a major one. And it didn't help that *Time*

illustrated its report of the sensationalistic study with even more sensationalistic graphics—including a cover image of a young child staring terrified and transfixed at some presumably lurid image on his computer screen and a full-page image of a man engaging in sexual congress with a computer. By raising the issue of children, moreover, *Time* also managed to misrepresent the focus of the study, which deals primarily with pornography on commercial BBSs that are carefully restricted to adults. In fact, the study says little about the more wide open and ungovernable Internet.

That *Time*'s editors decided to give this story a sensationalistic spin is hardly surprising. After all, the media has been awash in reports of "cyberporn" for several months now; the Senate, after a debate hardly exemplary in its devotion to mere fact, recently passed Sen. James Exon's (D-NE) dangerous and ill-designed "Communications Decency Act," criminalizing not only pornography but even routine profanity on the Net. (The House is expected to vote on the legislation before the summer recess.)

And while it is surely distressing that such a shoddy piece of research should gain wide public exposure, this, too, should hardly come as a surprise. The debate over pornography is one that has always been short on facts and long on melodrama, where apocryphal stories and apocalyptic rhetoric make more difference than scientific surveys. Most discussions of sexuality—whether or not they presume to be based upon scientific fact—rely on "evidence" no more compelling than that found in Rimm's study.

Indeed, Rimm's 83.5 percent statistic is not the only invented fact to fill the air in the recent debates. In a discussion of the report on *Nightline*, for example, Christian Coalition President Ralph Reed recounted the story of one youngster whose parents decided to hook up to the Internet. Leaving him alone for five minutes with computer and modem, they returned to find him staring at a photograph of bestiality he had somehow found online.

A riveting story, but almost certainly untrue, because such a turn of events would be virtually impossible. Smut—particularly of such a specialized nature—does not simply pop up on computer screens unannounced. First, you have to have the necessary software, and know how to use it. You have to realize that somewhere on the vast conglomeration of Usenet newsgroups there are pictures that can be downloaded. You have to wade through a list of up to 10,000 or so groups to find the right one. You have to be able to tell which posts in the group are pictures and which are not. You have to know how to download and decode the pictures you want, and how to view them. Even for those who know precisely what they want and how to get it, it's likely to take a lot longer than five minutes.

The Net—and particularly the network of newsgroups known as Usenet—is unregulated, and largely unregulatable. As opponents of the Exon bill and similar legislation have made clear, there is software available that can keep children from accessing most online smut. And some online services already provide “parental filters” for concerned customers. Like most things involving computers, the filters are hardly foolproof. But, short of draconian regulations of speech, mass arrests and the virtual dismantling or disabling of much the vast worldwide network, there is almost nothing that can be done to ensure that the Net remain always and forever free of improper images and words. Free speech may not always be pretty, but the alternative is much less pretty indeed. ◀

Rimm shot

Marketing Pornography on the Information Superhighway,” the study featured prominently in *Time* magazine's July 3 cover story, breaks nearly every rule of academic research—and then some. The evidence cited bears almost no relevance to the conclusions advanced; and the study's abstract seems to be describing an altogether different report. Its categorical assertions are nowhere proven in the study—and many seem simply unprovable.

Tellingly, the study's author, Marty Rimm, seems not to understand the notion of the “representative sample.” His survey of the origins of pornography on Usenet, for example, is based largely on a survey of the five Usenet newsgroups on which “the largest selection of sexual imagery was discovered.” This is roughly equivalent to basing a study of the publishing industry on the five thickest books at the local bookstore.

Astonishingly, Rimm seems to believe that his survey of pornography downloaded by students and staff at one particular university—Carnegie-Mellon University, a technically oriented school with a mostly male population—is representative enough to stand in for all universities. In a footnote explaining his (circular) logic, Rimm simply asserts that “there is no reason to believe consumption at the university studied differs from that of other universities from which pornographic Usenet newsgroups can be accessed.” A university is a university is a university.

In some ways the most remarkable thing about the Rimm survey is how utterly unremarkable its results really are. Even if all of its statistics were accurate, “Marketing Pornography” would prove little beyond the fact that pornography exists online—in forums, such as private “adult” BBSs that are specifically and explicitly devoted to porn. Much of the report is given over to the simple task of categorizing images—many of them taken from the Amateur Action BBS, a repository of notoriously hard-core imagery that is hardly typical of the Internet norm.



If the research is dubious, the researcher himself does not exactly inspire confidence either. Everything Rimm does seems characterized by an almost willful sloppiness. He has responded to critiques with indignant bluster and transparent evasion. And his e-mail messages and Usenet posts are filled with typos, misspellings and basic grammatical errors.

Though his research has been eagerly hailed by the religious right and by anti-pornography crusaders such as Catharine MacKinnon, Rimm is hardly your garden-variety bluenose. In a self-published novel of several years ago, Rimm—apparently drawing from his own experiences in Atlantic City—describes life and lust in the casino subculture in embarrassingly explicit detail.

Even stranger is *The Pornographer's Handbook*, Rimm's self-published guide to the effective marketing of dirty pictures via modem. Drawing heavily on the research underlying the more respectable Carnegie-Mellon study, Rimm is nothing if not specific in his advice. “When searching for the best anal sex images,” he tells potential pornographers, “you must take especial care to always portray the woman as smiling ... The slightest indication of pain can make some men limp.”

Like everything else in this case, even the simple fact of whether or not Rimm has “published” the book has become a matter of debate. He almost certainly has written something by this name. The book is listed in *Books in Print*, and lurid excerpts from it—which Rimm acknowledges are authentic—have been floating around the Net. Yet no one seems able to turn up a copy of the book itself, which Rimm now claims was simply a hoax. Rimm told the *Press of Atlantic City* that the book was a “satire on the pornography industry which was never printed, published, distributed or sold to anyone.” To *Wired* magazine contributor Brock N. Meeks, though, Rimm described it as a “marketing book.” It's hard to tell. After all, almost everything Rimm writes reads like a parody.

—D.F.

I N T H E A R T S

Kids these days

K

ids opens on a tight close-up of a deep open-mouthed kiss between two people who, when seen with a little more perspective as the camera cuts to a wider shot, are children. They're sitting on a bed overlooked by a collection of stuffed animals. The boy, Telly, starts his pitch with all the smarmy insistence of a used-car salesman trying to close a deal. His mark resists.

"I don't wanna get pregnant," whines the softening victim, who disappears from the movie as soon as she's on Telly's scorecard. "I just wanna make you happy," the baby Don Juan cajoles. From the look on her face when he proceeds to pound away at her on the bed, that's not what he does. But Telly, one of two Westside New York teenagers whose adven-

tures form the central thread of Larry Clark's rude teen vérité drama, is happy. "Virgins, I love 'em," he crows to his pal afterward, and he plans to bag another before the day is done. In a series of tableaux that are as seedy and shocking as they are dramatically formless, Telly and his pals drift from apartment to park to apartment, trolling for sex, liquor, drugs and skateboarding opportunities. They end the day at an all-night party during which the unswerving Telly does indeed nail another nubile New Yorker as the sun rises. One of his conquests arrives to tell him he's HIV-positive, but Telly never gets that message, or any other. Clark obviously thinks he's too cool to make a message movie.

That *Kids* should open in the same week as *Clueless*, a movie featuring Jane Austen intrigues among contemporary California teen angels, is one of those cosmic jests that inclines people to believe that popular culture is orchestrated, however perversely, by higher powers. Critics are behaving that way, in any event. They've been having a field day pointing out the ripe contrasts between Clark's seemingly undigested regurgitation of childish

depravity in Manhattan and Amy Heckerling's blissed-out caricature of Beverly Hills insularity, which is polished to the highest Hollywood gloss. One seems to be reality, the other as far from real life as Rodeo Drive is. One is harsh, the other glowing. It's like a punch in the gut versus a really nice backrub, but there is a market for both out there. *Kids* and *Clueless* will sell lots of tickets to adolescents and their elders trying to reinforce the ideas about teenagers they bring into the theaters with them.

Kids will get into *Kids* despite the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) decision to slap it with an NC-17 rating, which prohibits theater owners from admitting people under 17. Bob and Harvey Weinstein, the brothers who run Miramax, the distributor of *Kids*, have evaded the rating by forming a company to release just this one film. They did so because Disney, which purchased Miramax from the Weinsteins in 1993, has a company policy against releasing NC-17 movies. As a member of the MPAA, Disney is also prohibited from distributing unrated films, so the Weinsteins are releasing *Kids* independently—which allows them to tag it "unrated" and let theater owners sell tickets to kids the same age as the actors.

The Weinsteins, in unsuccessfully appealing the NC-17, insisted that *Kids* is an important educational experience for teenagers under 17. Let me quote *Clueless*' heroine Cher to comment on that: "As if!"

Of course, the very fact that *Kids* is shocking to adults is enough to make it glamorous to teenagers and not a sobering "education." The distributors' "educational"

Whether exploiting teen angst or spoofing teen angels, two directors seem little more than youth culture vultures.

By Pat Dowell

gambit reminds me of the way Cecil B. De Mille used to market his pagan orgy epics as exposés of sin. Which is not to say that first-time director Clark, a photographer noted for his portraits of alienated teens, hasn't made an informative movie. *Kids* is one of the few public places where you can hear an extended discussion among 15-

Kids year-old girls about whether or not to swallow, and what it tastes like if you do.
Directed by Larry Clark

Talk like that is what earned *Kids* its rating. It does have one episode of sudden mob violence, a little nudity, some clothed sexual frenzy—including the quiet rape of a girl who has nodded out. But what is finally shocking about the film is the raw, unceasing talk about sex that comes out of the mouths of babes—that, and the sordid emptiness of their lives.

These are kids who are truly home alone. There are virtually no adults in *Kids* except for the counselors in the local free clinic who deliver the HIV news to the other cen-

tral character of the movie, Jennie (Chloe Sevigny), a milky, fragile blonde whose only lover has been Telly (Leo Fitzpatrick). She spends the day trying to find him, which, along with Telly's hunt for a virgin, is Clark's way of giving his studied docudrama a plot. Clark punctuates *Kids* with crudely metaphorical asides, in which the camera lingers on a piteously deformed subway beggar or settles briefly on homeless men hunkered down in doorways, but as a director he is most interested in cultivating the illusion that *Kids* has absolutely nothing in common with slick movies like *Clueless*.

Kids was scripted by Harmony Korine, a former skateboard kid himself, whom Clark met while hanging out in parks where kids skated. The cast is largely drawn from there as well (Sevigny, however, is a pro). And this practice raises the question of exploitation. The kids add authenticity if not actual skill, and they look painfully young, but they are acting out an ugly, senseless series of actions (not to mention illegal, in some cases, as when a quartet of, what, 9-year-olds, sits on a couch smoking and discussing joints). You can say these are things they might do in real life, but that hardly seems a legitimate excuse to have them do such things for paying customers—most of whom are paying, I suspect, not for an education but to leer and express a smug outrage.

The writer-director of *Clueless*, Amy Heckerling, who made her debut with *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* in 1982, also claims to have done extensive research in the trenches. She hung out at Beverly Hills malls and high school haunts where





Clueless she could fashion the artful
Directed Amy Heckerling patois that makes *Clueless*
such a cheerfully loopy caricature of rich kids refining their

gluttony. Much of the dialogue will pass into the language, and the sturdy princess of *Clueless*, Cher, offers good advice for today's youth. To her sneezing friend Dionne, "When your allergies act up, take out your nose ring!" She also has a primitive liberal's take on social problems: In debate class (taught by Wallace Shawn), she compares the Haitian immigration crisis to a garden party in which unexpected guests show up and are accommodated by an efficient hostess. "And in conclusion, may I remind you that it doesn't say RSVP on the Statue of Liberty!" she ends triumphantly. Newt, take note.

Cher is played with the concentration of an athlete by Alicia Silverstone, who made her name starring in Aerosmith videos. She is no doubt the next Demi Moore, only talented. She is playing a character lifted from Jane Austen's *Emma*. Like Emma, Cher takes a new schoolgirl under her wing and into her closet, only to discover that it is she, the 15-year-old princess, who needs—no joke—"a makeover of the soul." Her quest brings her baby steps away from the narcissism of her comfortable life, and leads

her into the arms of formerly disapproving Josh, the son of Cher's father's ex-wife (he's almost her stepbrother, but nobody seems to notice).

The earnest Josh, a college freshman who arrives at Cher's house interested in pursuing environmental law and listening to what Cher calls "complaint rock," has moved even further from *his* ideals by the end of the movie, which should be a lesson to us all about the value of "light" entertainment like *Clueless*. Its essential message is moderation as a form of etiquette—too much politics is unpleasant, and so is too much reform or, for that matter, excessive self-absorption. That's the middle-class mantra of America, despite the fact that the kids in *Clueless* are mindlessly rich. At the other end of the fashion spectrum, *Kids*, with its generic title, is just as calculated a stereotype for the downtown adults who want to write off young people as serious participants in society. *Clueless*, for all its superficiality, at least doesn't indulge the displays of woman-hating, racism and gay-bashing that come so easily to the characters of *Kids*—a movie that is as unrealistic (I suspect) and, in its way, as trivial (I know) as *Clueless*. After all, as Wallace Shawn tells his class, "Tolerance is always a good lesson, even when it comes out of nowhere." ◀

IN PRINT

Bombs away

By Uday Mohan

"[N]ot one word of sympathy... for the survivors of Hiroshima's dead ... not one ray of recognition of the question that ... ought to haunt Harry Truman: 'Was it really necessary? Might a mere demonstration of the bomb, followed by an ultimatum, do the trick?' If there is a satisfactory answer to that question, the people of the United States have a right to hear it."

This quotation, remarkably enough, comes from *The National Review* in March 1958, when it was busy establishing its reputation as the fire-breathing leader of conservative opinion in the United States. In an editorial, presumably written by editor William F. Buckley, the journal challenged Harry Truman's unfeeling response to a resolution of the Hiroshima City Council condemning his statement that he "felt no compunction whatsoever" in ordering the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Another article the *Review* published a few weeks later by Harry Elmer Barnes sounded the same note of moral outrage, as it laid out the argument against Truman's decision: "Well-informed persons have known for years that the bombing of these Japanese cities was not needed to bring the war to a speedy end and make it unnecessary to launch an assault against the American mainland. ... It has been difficult, however, to get this momentous fact before the American public in any effective manner."

It continues to be difficult, even after the "revisionist" interpretation of Truman's decision has passed to the other side of the political spectrum—and edged into the mainstream of American historiography. Now that the 50th anniversary of Truman's fateful decision has arrived, a pair of new books re-examines the moral questions raised by *The National Review* at the height of the Cold War.

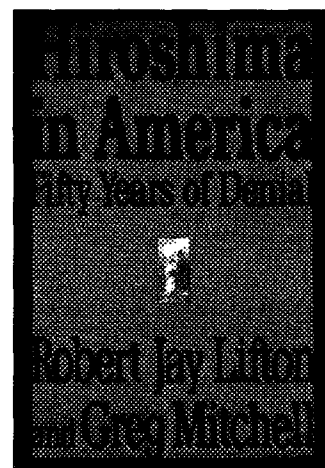
In *Hiroshima in America*, renowned psychologist Robert J. Lifton and Greg Mitchell (the former editor of *Nuclear Times*) carefully explore the psychological damage and political distortions wrought by the bomb. University of California at Berkeley Professor of Ethnic Studies Ronald

Takaki, meanwhile, discusses in *Hiroshima* the racial and cultural considerations informing the decision to drop the bomb. Both books probe a wound in the national psyche freshly reopened with the divisive debate over the Smithsonian Institution's "Enola Gay" exhibit. And both books attempt to look at the bombing of Hiroshima (an event that can be more resistant to questioning than the second, clearly unnecessary, Nagasaki bomb) in effective new ways.

For Lifton and Mitchell, Hiroshima is the untouched raw nerve we must tend to if we hope to achieve psychological, moral and political renewal. The centrality of Hiroshima, they argue, lies in the country's embrace of a life-threatening nuclearism—essentially a belief in the liberating power of nuclear weapons. This embrace issued directly from the country's failure to confront the true proportions of Hiroshima, and led, the authors maintain, to a series of social ills long submerged under the unstable but so far indestructible official narrative about nuclear weapons in America.

These ills bear description at some length, since they are quite revealing in their own right and unusually rich as psychological descriptions of political pathologies. In describing "nuclear entrapment," Lifton and Mitchell argue that no people has been more imprisoned by Hiroshima's legacy than ourselves, as we have sought desperately to justify the stockpiling (indeed, the flaunting) of nuclear weapons. "Moral inversion," meanwhile, ratchets up this process by insisting that virtue can be located in the bombing of Hiroshima. Inversion, of course, was the reflexive instinct of Truman and many of his policy-makers; as Lifton and Mitchell note, this interpretation has led to the creation of a "counterfeit universe" that falsifies morality in the "most dangerous of all matters."

What the writers call "apocalyptic concealment" acts to suppress knowledge of nuclear issues and ironically has produced the opposite of concealment: a widespread despair that we gain control over that most fundamental concern, how and when we are to die. Lifton and Mitchell also chart the broader consequences of Hiroshima in



**Hiroshima in America:
Fifty Years of Denial**

By Robert J. Lifton and
Greg Mitchell

G.P. Putnam's Sons
425 pp., \$27.50

**Hiroshima:
Why America Dropped the
Atomic Bomb**

By Ronald Takaki

Little, Brown
193 pp., \$19.95

our political culture. What they call “American numbing”—or our “diminished capacity or inclination to feel”—begins with our disavowal of the human costs of the bomb and leads to present-day breakdowns of our moral imagination, such as our selective inattention to atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. “Futurelessness and cultural disarray” is a more diffuse but equally damaging legacy of the bomb—the disruption of the sense of human continuity and connectedness to biological and spiritual life. This disruption, in turn, calls forth more perverse forms of transcendence, such as a “final nuclear apocalypse.”

This list may seem too therapeutic in tone and single-minded in laying so many sources of American malaise at the feet of Hiroshima. But this sort of broad-ranging engagement with the bomb’s effect on all modes of American life is the necessary antidote to an equally sweeping (and self-induced) moral amnesia about the bomb.

The other signal contribution of Lifton and Mitchell’s book is to marshal compelling evidence that the official narrative of the Hiroshima decision was unstable at its core and required deliberate efforts within the Truman administration to prevent damaging knowledge about the bomb from surfacing in public debate. In early 1947, former Secretary of War Henry Stimson and the young defense intellectual McGeorge Bundy published in *Harper’s* an authoritative-sounding account of why the bomb was dropped. Stimson and Bundy were writing at the behest of other leading officials—notably atomic advisers Vannevar Bush and James Conant. The defense establishment was clearly determined to close ranks in the face of potential questioning of the official narrative.

But well before Stimson and Bundy went public, the authors argue, Truman’s administration took care to see that anything throwing doubt on the legitimacy of the decision to drop the bomb—and thereby on the production and potential use of nuclear weapons—was suppressed or downplayed. This was especially true of the disturbing evidence of large numbers of radiation deaths from the two atomic bombs. And crucial to the legitimation of the bomb was controlling access to the visual evidence of the bomb’s human costs—for example, through the confiscation of film footage shot by Japanese and American film crews. (The power of visual evidence, indeed, was a central part of the controversy over the “Enola Gay” exhibit.) By carefully reconstructing the official record of suppression, evasion and inconsistency, Lifton and Mitchell show that the official narrative was *explicitly constructed* by Truman administration officials to deny their own doubts and knowledge, as well as those of the scientific and journalistic communities. (Journalists, however, were not merely passive conduits of misinformation. Rather, as Sanho Tree and I show in a forthcoming article in *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, they actively contributed to the official narrative’s construction by, among other things, setting aside their understanding that the end of the war was in fact fast

approaching prior to the bombing of Hiroshima.)

The particulars of Truman’s decision thus appear in Lifton and Mitchell’s account as more morally troubled than Truman himself struggled to make them seem. Truman emerges as a tragic figure, placed unprepared into an “atrocious-producing situation,” which is to say a longstanding plan to develop and use the bomb, set in motion under the imprimatur of FDR. This momentum was further fueled by pushy advisers who forcefully advocated use of the bomb—especially Leslie Groves, head of the Manhattan Project, and Secretary of State James Byrnes. This pressure was compounded further by Truman’s own psychological need to appear a decisive leader. The successful test of the bomb in Alamogordo, N.M., on July 16, 1945, further accelerated the momentum of this process, bolstering Truman’s sense of his own power and self-confidence, and creating a corresponding fear that failure to use the bomb would damage Truman’s political image. Nevertheless, if Truman seemed for the most part “like a little boy on a Toboggan” (in Groves’s phrase), Lifton and Mitchell emphasize that he made deliberate, self-conscious choices that finally led to the decision to drop the bomb. And, of course, Truman’s subsequent justifications and denials served as a national model for the psychological strategies of evading the meaning of the bomb that Lifton and Mitchell catalogue with such care.

The psychological approach the writers adopt implicates us as well, for we can identify many of our own habits of thought in the deferred national confrontation with nuclearism. Yet for all its sophistication, there is a strong sense in which Lifton and Mitchell’s historical analysis goes both too far and not far enough. The writers interpret Hiroshima as an originary moment, which we have neglected to our thoroughgoing detriment. But surely the official Hiroshima narrative is part of a larger national narrative of numbing, moral inversion and so on, which allowed the United States no official recognition (to take just one example) of the genocidal treatment of Native Americans.

This sort of historical tunnel vision also allows the writers to disregard the ways that Hiroshima unravels earlier mythic constructs even as it forms new ones. As Tom Engelhardt argues in *The End of Victory Culture*, the master narrative of American triumphalism and progress started to erode with Hiroshima—one ironic benefit of the atrocity of the bomb. Moreover, it is not clear—as much of Lifton and Mitchell’s analysis implies—that registering the true horror of Hiroshima would lead to antinuclear practice. Eisenhower, as the writers themselves note, criticized the Hiroshima decision on moral grounds but also initiated a nuclear buildup and formal first-strike policy. Psychological clarity may not be enough, then, to mitigate nuclearism. As Joel Kovel has suggested in *Against the State of Nuclear Terror*, ideological constructs and our dependency on the state may be more compelling forces.

With the Smithsonian episode fresh in mind, Lifton and Mitchell conclude that “America was clearly far from being ready to commemorate Hiroshima in 1995.” The media—

pushed by veterans' groups and feeding off congressional furor, but hardly needing either—repeated many of the distortions that plagued earlier anniversary coverage of the bomb. But the one-sided nature of the Smithsonian exhibit does not necessarily prove the tenacity of the official narrative. My own research into the Smithsonian controversy—contrary to what Lifton and Mitchell find—shows that the media have allowed scholarly questioning of the official narrative in the form of an occasional op-ed piece, but almost never in news accounts. It's true that critical scholarship has not yet attained the status of "objective fact." But opinion polls show that the official narrative does not effortlessly hold sway. This March, after a year-long attack on the Smithsonian exhibit, only 53 percent of Americans approved the use of the bomb. And contrary to those who interpret the Enola Gay episode as a culture war—pitting ideas of "political correctness" against notions of American patriotism—polls point to a divide that is more generational than cultural. Younger Americans, polls suggest, are far more disposed to view the Hiroshima decision with historical detachment.

Cultural considerations did, of course, loom large in the decision to drop the bomb, as Ronald Takaki argues. Takaki's *Hiroshima* goes over some of the same ground Lifton and Mitchell cover. Indeed, the convergence of the books at certain points suggests that much of what might be called the counternarrative of Hiroshima (as assembled by many of the subject's leading historians, notably Gar Alperovitz, Martin Sherwin, Leon Sigal and Barton Bernstein) now is widening to take in a broad range of cultural and psychological concerns.

Takaki views Truman's psychology, for example, through the cultural prism of America's longstanding anti-Asian racism. The Pacific Theater's status as a race war—carefully documented in historian John Dower's 1986 book *War Without Mercy*—permitted Truman to overcome his

self-doubts as a leader, while priming his "fierce memory" of the infamy of the Pearl Harbor attack. Encircled by his own cultural understanding of the world—harkening back to the mythology of the American frontier—Truman appears in Takaki's account as a still greater victim of personal and external forces beyond his control. Among the latter, Takaki argues that the momentum of the Manhattan Project and the fear of the nascent Soviet threat proved especially decisive.

Takaki's perspective on Hiroshima is illuminating, but he, too, ends up offering what, by current historiographical standards, is a very conventional account of the decision to drop the bomb. *Hiroshima* offers few new challenges to the official narrative, except, perhaps, for Takaki's stress on Gen. Douglas MacArthur's reservations about the bomb. The focus on race Takaki seeks to develop might have been strengthened by considering how the bomb fit into America's desire to swiftly—and decisively—restore the international racial balance that American officials believed that the Japanese "Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" had threatened. Diplomatic historian Christopher Thorne's work on international race relations provides a suggestive model for such an approach.

Despite such shortcomings, books like Takaki's—and Lifton and Mitchell's—offer important openings in the country's ongoing confrontation with the bomb and its legacy. But the critical questions raised by the *National Review*—and the "revisionist" interpretations offered by left historians—won't be resolved in purely psychological or cultural terms. Ongoing interrogations of the historical record must continue to accompany fresh efforts to situate the bomb in a wider context. Hiroshima, the site of a profoundly unstable narrative in our national politics, can be clearly fixed in our memory only by continually revisiting the true proportions of the bomb's horror—and by going over the evidence the past can offer to challenge the official story.

Uday Mohan is a graduate student in history at The American University in Washington, D.C., who is studying the representations of Hiroshima in American culture.



Rebirth of a nation

By Eric Foner

In the past year, Michael Lind, a former conservative turned critic of the right, has emerged as a provocative commentator on American politics. Whether tackling the odd alignment of neoconservative intellectuals with anti-Enlightenment advocates of "creation science," or noting the persistence of class inequality in American society, his writings in journals such as *Dissent*, *Harper's* and *The New Republic*—where he now works as a senior editor—have been crisp, stimulating and often original.

Given the quality of his shorter pieces, *The Next American Nation*, Lind's full-length entry into the arena of political diagnosis and prescription, can only be regarded as a disappointment. The book attempts to move politics beyond current preoccupations of both left and right, toward a "new nationalism," based on emphasizing what Americans share in common, rather than the racial, ethnic and gender identities that often divide them. Unfortunately, *The Next American Nation* is unpersuasive in argument, tedious in style and prone to factual error. It bears the marks of excessive haste in preparation, as if Lind and his publisher could not wait to cash in on his newfound celebrity.

To be sure, Lind's book does not lack for useful insights. Lind is at his best in deconstructing currently fashionable cant phrases and myths. Take, for example, his discussion of the notion of American exceptionalism—the longstanding belief that America's calling is to spread democratic values throughout the world. Lind rightly points out that supposedly unique elements of American life—an ethnically diverse population, democratic institutions, a sense of historic mission—are to be found in many other countries. Among industrialized nations, Lind writes, America is "different" mainly because we lead the world in homicides, beggars and the number of citizens behind bars.

Lind also offers a valuable analysis of the current plight of the American economy, examining in rich detail such familiar developments as the flight of manufacturing jobs overseas, stagnant real wages, a widening gap between rich

and poor, and a declining labor movement. He provides a devastating account of how conservative free trade policies are being used to roll back the social safety net created by the New Deal and Great Society. The net effect, Lind argues, is the "Brazilianization" of America—that is, the creation of a low-wage economy ruled by a fabulously rich "overclass."

To reverse these trends, Lind proposes that the federal government set out to protect jobs and raise wages by slapping a "social tariff" on goods produced abroad by cheap labor, restoring progressive taxation and restricting immigration. To implement such policies, he adds, it will be necessary to sever the links between big money and politics—and to abolish the U.S. Senate (where representation by state, not population, enables sparsely populated rural areas to block progressive legislation). Most of these proposals are perfectly sensible; however, none (except immigration restriction) has the remotest chance of enactment in the current political climate. More likely to be implemented, since it is so closely attuned to our conservative times, is the second prong of Lind's "nationalist" program—the elimination of affirmative action in the name of making the United States a "color-blind" society.

Before launching into his attack on "multiculturalism" and "racial preference," Lind offers a lengthy, iconoclastic summary of American history. Here, Lind's analysis goes badly awry. According to Lind, the years since the Revolution can be divided into three distinct eras or "republics," each with its own definition of the American people. In the first, or Anglo-Saxon, republic (1789-1861), "real" Americans were held to be white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. In the second, the era of "Euro-America," (1875-1957), differences between Catholics and Protestants and between old and new immigrants were overcome by assimilation: to be an American meant simply to be white. The civil rights revolution destroyed this racially exclusive understanding of the nation and held out the prospect of a truly non-racist Americanism. But the movement's promise was hijacked, Lind argues, by black power ideologues seeking a larger piece of the pie for themselves—and by conservative politicians



The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution
By Michael Lind
Free Press
436 pp., \$25

eager to reap the benefits of racial discord. Together, these unlikely allies transformed equal rights into the pervasive system of "racial preference" which, according to Lind, defines the Third Republic of today.

Lind has read fairly widely in the literature of American history. A little learning, however, can be a dangerous thing. Lind is quite correct to argue that at many points, nationality has been defined in racial terms. After all, the nation's first naturalization law, enacted in 1790, limited the process of becoming a citizen to white immigrants. But Lind's monomaniacal attempt to squeeze all of American history into a racist schema is, to say the least, misleading.

Lind's model requires the reader to ignore the Civil War and Reconstruction, when the nation made its first effort to incorporate blacks as equal citizens. (His chronology does not even include the years 1861-1875.) Lind sees the evolving definition of American nationality as a set of ideas imposed by elites, rather than being continually contested at all levels of society. And his analysis reduces leading figures of our history to caricatures whose only important attribute is their stance on race. From Lind's point of view, the main thing we need to know about Jefferson and Lincoln is that they believed in colonizing blacks outside the country. (Lind neglects to mention that Lincoln abandoned this idea in the midst of the Civil War and went on to advocate citizenship rights for at least some blacks.) Meanwhile, Lind implausibly identifies FDR as a founder of the modern civil rights movement, although as president he never risked alienating influential Southern Democrats whose power rested on denying blacks the right to vote.

Having summarized American history in his own idiosyncratic way, Lind launches into a fierce attack on multiculturalism, an expression, in his mind, of the current system of racial preferences. He blames multiculturalism for many of the evils that afflict modern American society. Here he adopts the familiar, if annoying, polemical techniques of attributing to an entire movement the views of its most extreme members and making broad generalizations unsubstantiated by quotations from specific individuals. Multiculturalists believe that America consists of more than one distinct culture, but how many really hold, as Lind claims, that the United States is not a nation at all? Do all multiculturalists really deny the existence of classes within the black or Hispanic communities, as Lind writes? A vast literature has in fact appeared in recent years that addresses the class divisions among these groups.

More important, Lind vastly exaggerates the pervasiveness of "racial preference," which he describes as the "orga-

nizing principle" of contemporary life, the "prevailing orthodoxy of the American regime." A quick look at corporate boardrooms, university faculties, or any other site where power is exercised in our society, will refute his now tired complaint—echoed among conservative and liberal pundits alike—that whites are a disadvantaged group.

Affirmative action, Lind insists, betrays the aspirations of the civil rights movement, which he defines as "color-blind law and politics." He can make this claim only by ignoring the economic demands central to the movement. The slogan of the March on Washington in 1963, after all, was "jobs and freedom," not "color-blind laws." Like many recent writers, Lind insists that affirmative action repudiates the color-blind ideas of Martin Luther King Jr., blithely ignoring the fact that King strongly supported what he himself called "special treatment" for blacks as a necessary measure in overcoming the legacy of discrimination.

For his fourth American republic of the future, Lind proposes to abolish not only racial preferences but official cognizance of race itself: The government should stop collecting census data on the basis of race and refrain from organizing other information that divides Americans into racial groups. We will no longer, presumably, be able to compare black and white rates of unemployment, school graduation, infant mortality and the like. How this will help black Americans is not explained.

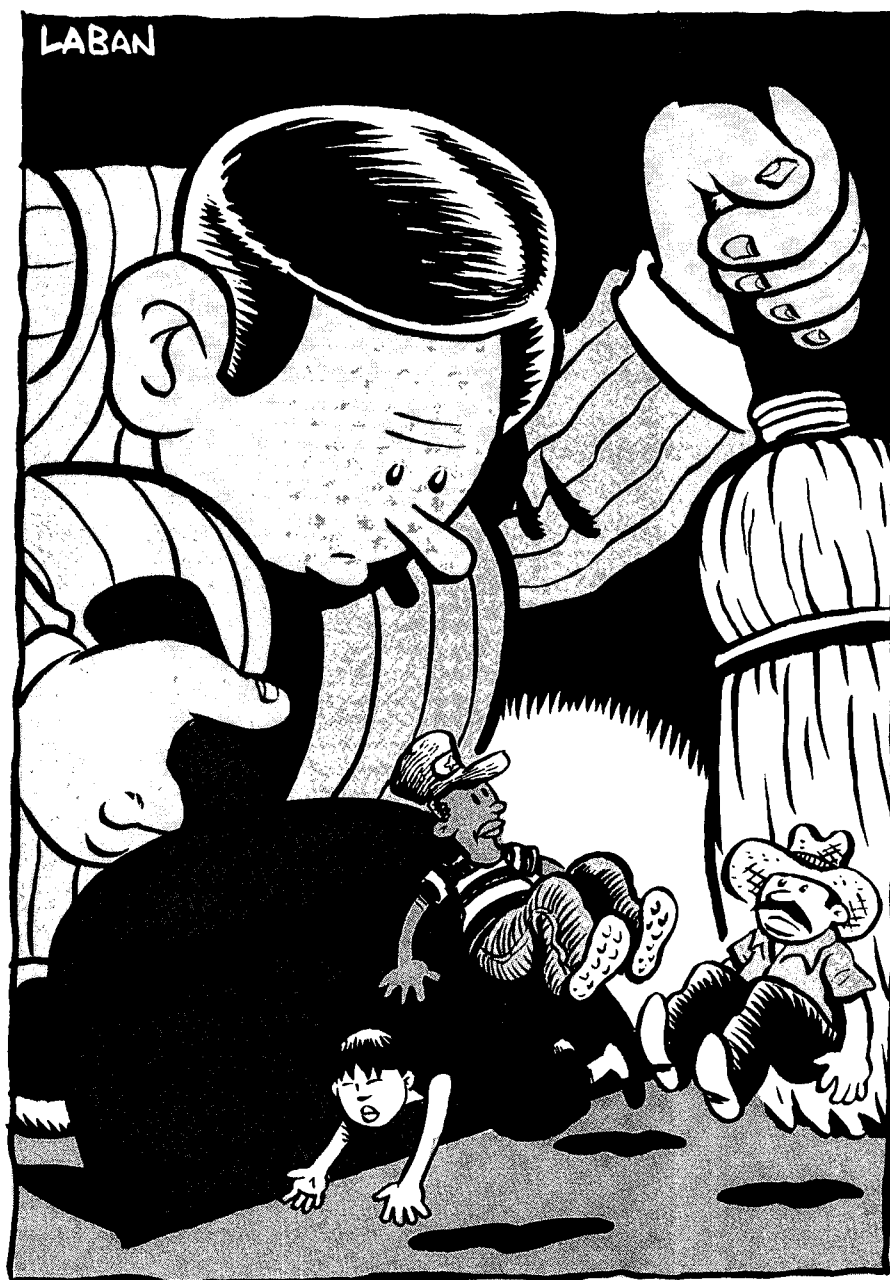
Persistent exaggerations and inaccuracies weaken the force of Lind's critique. He writes as though strict racial quotas are the only expression of affirmative action, ignoring the numerous other means by which institutions, public and private, have sought to encourage racial diversity and overcome the effects of past discrimination. He insists that racial and gender preferences benefit only well-to-do minorities and "white overclass feminists," whereas in fact they have enabled large numbers of less affluent non-whites and women to gain a foothold in skilled working-class and white-collar jobs from which they were previously excluded.

Most distressing of all, Lind assumes that declaring the nation color-blind will make it so. Lind seeks to avoid the Brazilianization of the American economy, but his obsession with color-blindness points to a racial policy akin to Brazil's, where the prevailing rhetoric of "racial democracy" masks a social order in which racial prejudices are pervasive, the bottom rungs of society are overwhelmingly populated by non-whites, and the government suppresses data that would demonstrate the persistence of racial inequalities.

The call for a politics based on class, not race, much in the air nowadays, has a beguiling appeal. But it rests on the fallacious assumption that race and class are mutually exclu-



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tures. But, he argues, if blacks object to a politics based on color-blindness, the “new nationalists” should “break with them” and seek allies among the Hispanic and Asian populations (this from a writer who denounces the use of racial categories in politics). Essentially, Lind is asking minorities to give up what few benefits they receive under present arrangements, while they wait patiently for him and his allies to realign national politics, abolish the Senate and place tariffs on goods produced by cheap labor.

Lind is so concerned with the dangers inherent in the celebration of diversity that he in effect throws the pluralist baby out with the multiculturalist bathwater. To the extent that (unnamed) multiculturalists believe that culture is fixed, hereditary and racially defined, Lind is perfectly correct to denounce them. (This view, however, is much more prominently advanced in conservative circles; witness Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein’s *The Bell Curve* and Peter Brimelow’s *Alien Nation*.) But there is a vast middle ground between this idea and Lind’s view that a nation cannot survive without a homogeneous culture and population.

Americans, Lind believes, already share a common culture, although in his description it seems little more than a combination of middle-class consumerism and familiarity with images purveyed by the mass media—cultural traits that are hardly unique to the United States. The American people, by contrast, are too diverse for Lind’s taste.

Indeed, in one of his zanier twists, Lind forthrightly advocates what used to be called miscegenation to assimilate all Americans into a new, “amalgamated” people. Such a process has, indeed, occurred among the descendants of white immigrants, and rates of intermarriage among whites, Asians and Hispanics are on the rise. Lind has to admit, though, that large-scale black-white sexual mixing is a “distant goal.”

sive categories. In this country, in fact, they are and always have been overlapping ones. Of course, not all whites are affluent, and not all minorities are poor. But historically, non-whites have been exploited *both* as part of the working class and as a segment of society subject to unique forms of political and economic disenfranchisement—not to mention outright violence. There is no contradiction between a politics aimed at uplifting ordinary wage-earners in general and one designed to deal with the unique inequalities non-whites have experienced in America. Both are urgently needed.

Politically, Lind’s aim is to resurrect the old New Deal coalition, a goal more ambiguous than he appears to realize. For in that coalition, minorities were very much junior partners. Lind recognizes that black voters are an essential source of support for progressive economic mea-

In Lind’s fourth American republic, groups that object to being “amalgamated” out of existence will definitely be out of place. Here the ’60s shibboleth, the personal is political, is revived with a vengeance. Lind, it seems, would rather escape from actually existing American life, messy and pluralist as it may be, than engage and reform it.

Eric Foner is DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University.

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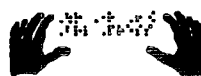
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these raucous meetings as essential elements in a democratic dialogue—each offered him access to his foes, each was an opportunity to stake his claim for federal regulation of the public lands; with luck, he might also moderate his antagonists' perspectives. Civic peace could be maintained through civil discussion.

Civility did not mean a dearth of discord, however. Pinchot expected verbal fireworks and tense confrontations, and he got them. Nowhere was this more true than at the Denver Public Lands Convention held in mid-June 1907. Called by the Colorado legislature during an upsurge in Western frustration with Roosevelt's conservation policies, the convention was billed as a showdown between advocates of states' rights and defenders of federal sovereignty. Although the convention had no formal federal authority, its more than 4,000 delegates were expected to pass easily a series of tough resolutions lambasting Roosevelt and Pinchot and demanding congressional redress.

So much for expectations. As one Western newspaper snorted, the delegates instead left Denver "roaring as mildly as a sucking dove." Pinchot was largely responsible for this about-face. Though continually heckled during the conference, he stood his ground, patiently laying down the reasons why rigorous regulations for sheep and cattle grazing, and of timber cutting and mining, were critical to a healthy landscape and a prosperous economy. He reminded his audience that while their particular economic needs were important, and while each interest should be fulfilled where possible, none could expect to supplant the carrying capacity of the land. Should his generation fail in its duty to the land, "no amount of success in any other direction will keep us prosperous," Pinchot argued. "It is a question of both the present and the future." Private interests must give way to the public good.

That's still true. Indeed, Pinchot's blunt arguments and aggressive political strategy may offer some hope for resolving the late 20th-century controversy over the control and utilization of public lands. His goal, after all, was to confront those "short-sighted persons unable to draw the line between small immediate advantage and great permanent good," forcing them to accept the overarching needs of the collective, an approach that thrust the principles of conservation to center stage. Once these ideals became the basis for discussion, he was able to mute, if not undercut, his opponents, and build a new political coalition in support of a conservation ethos.

Although this strategy has undeniable contemporary relevance, we live in different times. Bill Clinton is not Teddy Roosevelt. Pinchot knew that TR, whose political mien one historian has called "velvet on iron," would back him to the hilt; Clinton, as Forest Service leaders know all too well, has yet to show his mettle.

Yet I don't see that these agency heads have any choice but to come out swinging. If they do not become highly visible presences in the political landscape, if they continue to duck before the radioled onslaught rather than forcefully bring their arguments before the public, then the Carson City bombers will have caused more than minor damage to one district office. They will have blown apart the Forest Service's historic commitment to defend public lands in the name of the public good. ◀

Char Miller teaches history at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.



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Early in the evening of March 30, a small bomb ripped through the offices of the National Forest Service in Carson City, Nev., splintering windows, punching through walls and destroying computer equipment. Although there were no injuries, the blast—assumed to be the work of the so-called county supremacy movement—sent a chilling message to the men and women who patrol the nation's public lands. When the earth moved in Nevada, tremors also rippled through Washington, D.C., where Forest Service officials, who had already been backing off from confrontations with far-right opponents of federal authority, backed off even further.

A scant week before the bombing, the agency disseminated a memo warning its staff about the county supremacists, a loosely organized movement of ranchers, loggers and other Westerners who have challenged the federal government's authority over public lands. To federal employees looking for strong support from Washington, the memo offered little solace. "For some members of the public," the memo explained, "federal ownership of the public lands is an emotional issue. Everyone is entitled to an opinion regarding the ownership and management of public lands." The memo encouraged employees to avoid confrontations by driving their own cars and trucks rather than using the official, signature-green Forest Service vehicles. If you lie low enough, the theory seems to run, the current gales of Western animosity toward the federal government and its local employees will simply blow over. For Forest Service chief Jack Ward Thomas and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, all's quiet on the Western front.

Too quiet. By not directly challenging their opponents, or forcefully articulating why public lands are in the national inter-

How the West was won

By Char Miller

est, not only are these leaders failing their embattled employees, but they are also abandoning the fighting spirit of the agency's first chief, Gifford Pinchot, who established the Forest Service 90 years ago. With Pinchot in charge, and President Theodore Roosevelt giving him strong support, the Forest Service moved aggressively to rein in the uncontrolled grazing and mining then ravaging federal lands. When those early forest rangers laid down survey lines and began enforcing federal law within those boundaries, the lumber companies and cattle ranchers who had ruthlessly exploited the public domain were gunning for them. In a

movement that became known as the Sagebrush Rebellion, many Westerners vocally—and sometimes violently—opposed Pinchot and his agency.

But at least then the federal government fought back. And the fact that Pinchot eventually quelled the Sagebrush Rebellion is not incidental to our time. Unfortunately, officials in Washington seem blissfully unaware that in the Forest Service's contentious past lies a solution to their current problems.

Pinchot, for one, never adopted a policy of duck and cover. During this century's first decade, he roamed throughout the West challenging those who challenged him. Hopping one train after another, Pinchot traveled to meetings in Denver, Salt Lake City and Boise, to Cheyenne, Portland and Spokane, where invariably he found himself standing before intensely hostile crowds. Their hostility had been stoked by an insurgent press that regularly castigated him as an autocratic and vengeful czar; today's talk radio has nothing on these ink-stained purveyors of hate. He approached

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